

*Sassafras-Ferny Creek Fire Brigade ... Volunteers serving the community*

## Preparing for a long hot summer ...

It seems that every year there are dire warnings about the coming summer ... it will be the hottest, driest, most bushfire prone ever.

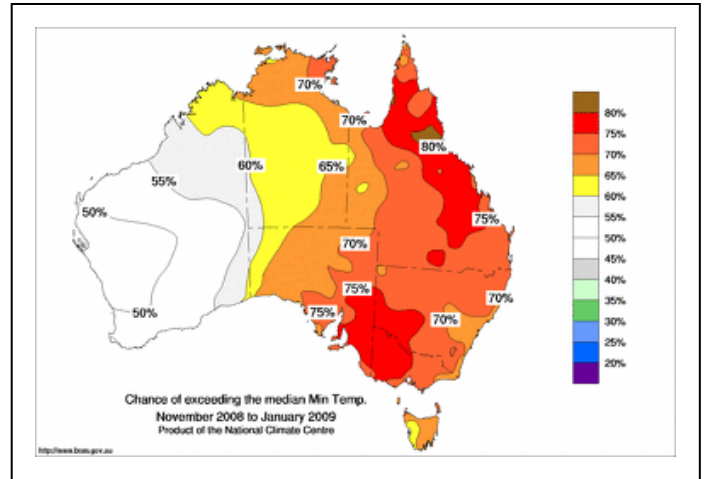
It's a bit like the boy who cried wolf ... eventually everyone stops listening until it's too late.

This year the warnings have started to come early and not without some cause. According to the Bureau of Meteorology, *The Sunday Age* reported recently, Melbourne faces its driest spring on record, with September–October rainfall of 26 millimetres — just two-thirds of the previous record low, set in 1914. The long-term outlook for the rest of the year is also drier than average.

The bureau's 2008–09 Seasonal Bushfire Assessment has pointed to areas such as the Dandenong Ranges as being at increased risk.

"Forested areas have the largest risk ... an early start to the fire season is likely in much of this area," it says.

"There is a long-term underlying dryness across much of the state that has developed from 12 years of rainfall deficiencies ... fuel loads indicate that far-east Gippsland and Melbourne's water



catchments are two forested areas with accumulated forest fuels. (These) are areas of particular concern, as are the Otway and Macedon Ranges."

Locally DSE/Parks Victoria in partnership with CFA have done some excellent fuel reduction work over the past couple of years, which will help mitigate the impact of any outbreaks.

But the need for preparation and vigilance over the coming month on the part of all residents is already apparent.

## Carols on the Mountain ... it's warbling time again!

Come join us for the fourth annual Carols on the Mountain, a free community event conducted by your local fire brigade.

**Date:** Saturday 13 December

**Location:** Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve

**Time:** Gates open 6.30pm

**Featuring:** Local soloist Shaula Salathe, the National Youth Chorale, Dandenong Ranges Sing Australia Choir and choirs from Sassafras, Ferny Creek and Mt Dandenong Primary Schools.

Sausage sizzle, soft drinks, glow sticks, glow balls and programs all on sale.

**STRICTLY NO ALCOHOL**



## Vegetation management: something you *can* do ...

### Reduce fine fuels

All plants provide fuel for a bushfire. However, it is the fine fuels (those less than a finger's width) that contribute most to the heat and speed of a fire. Fine fuels include dry grass, leaves, twigs and loose bark but does not include larger logs or branches.

Minimising fine fuels reduces the heat of a fire and its ability to spread across the ground and up into the tree-tops. Reducing fine fuels can also create a space in which to defend your home from embers.

- Weeds often contribute to high fuel loads. Give priority to removing these.
- Fine fuels may be reduced around the house by mowing, raking or slashing.
- Reduce accumulated debris such as loose flaky bark, dead branches, leaves or pine needles from within the branches of shrubs around your house. Be mindful not to damage the tree under the bark.

While some plants may not burn in low to moderately

### Briefly ... briefly ... briefly ...

**A WAY TO HELP:** Looking for a way to help the brigade but not interested in firefighting? The brigade auxiliary is always on the lookout for members. Contact: [secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au)

**NEW LOCAL BURNING LAW:** A new local burning law came into effect across the Shire of Yarra Ranges on 1 July 2008. For details of how the law affects you, contact the shire on 1300 368 333 or visit [www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au). Please note that the provisions of the CFA Act must also be considered during the fire danger period.

**BURNING OFF:** Call 1800 668 511 to register your burnoff or submit a burnoff notification form available at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

**FIREBREAK ONLINE:** For a full colour version of this newsletter, plus back issues, go to: [www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

People who live in a high fire risk area need to develop a practical bushfire survival plan and be prepared.



intense fires, *all plants can burn in high intensity fires* (those fires when you and your home are most at risk).

Different plants burn differently. This is influenced by a number of features, which are also influenced by how old the plant is, the environment it is growing in (including the season) and how it is looked after (for example, if it is well-watered).

### Don't rely on plants being "fire retardant"

*You should not rely* on published lists of "fire retardant" or "hard to burn" plant species. Many lists are out of date and advocate plants that will little impact on the safety of your home during a bushfire. Some of these plants are also weeds.

The local council can provide information to help you select plants that are suitable for your local environment.

(Source: CFA website: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au))

### Sassafras-Ferny Creek Fire Brigade Online

Check out the latest news and information, plus links to other important online resources @

[www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

### Brigade & CFA contacts

John Schauble: 9755 1402

Anna-Marie Shew: 9755 1870

Fire Station (answering service):  
9755 1078

E-mail: [secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au)

Brigade website: [www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

CFA Yarra Area Office, Lilydale: 8739 1300

CFA website: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

Victorian Bushfire Information Line: 1800 240 667



**TO REPORT A FIRE,  
ALWAYS DIAL 000**