

## Weather Forecast

The weather briefing from the Bureau of Meteorology as part of the Commonwealth EMA Annual Preparedness Briefing on 12 September provided the following information in relation to Victoria:

- 24 month rainfall deficit – Mallee and Wimmera;
- temperature – strong trend for warmer temperatures both day and night throughout Spring;
- 50% chance of an el nino in 2014; and
- bushfire potential remains elevated in central Victoria, north west Victoria, and parts of the north east of the state.

## District 27 Update

Last Wednesday evening I was fortunate to attend a really positive briefing with brigade staff and volunteers to discuss the new CFA “District 27” which will cover the area of Latrobe City Council. This was the first part of our consultation process and the discussion informed us of a number of key issues in establishing the new district. The feedback we got from members will help inform the allocation of resources for District 27, the development of response plans and how we integrate with industry operators.

I began the session with some key updates on the new district so far:

- District 27 will be implemented over three phases and will be fully established by April 2015;
- the establishment of the new district will not disrupt operations for the upcoming fire season – districts 9 and 10 will continue to coordinate Command and Control arrangements during this period;
- in the next month a Project Manager will be appointed to manage the implementation of the new district and an Operations Manager appointed by 1 December 2014 to start action on the ground;
- consultation will continue with local brigades, local community and industry throughout the process

Members identified a number of advantages and opportunities presented by the new district, including:

- district operations staff being closer to Brigades and Groups;
- enhanced health and safety monitoring;
- increased capabilities and capacity to deal with mine fires; and
- an opportunity to build better relationships with the power industry and coal mine staff.

They also raised some key issues to consider in the establishment of the new district, including:

- clear consideration of the resources required to achieve specialized training in this area;
- the need to carefully assess the risk of resourcing impacts on other nearby districts; and
- the need for regular communication with members on improvements as they happen.

I will now commence further dialogue with volunteers, career staff, GDF Suez and other operators of critical infrastructure in the Latrobe Valley around the formation of the new district. A communication and engagement strategy is being developed by the communication team at CFA HQ to ensure that members are aware of and involved in the process. We encourage members to continue to send issues, suggestions, challenges and other relevant information relating to the establishment of District 27 to: [district27@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:district27@cfa.vic.gov.au). We are now also calling for nominations for the Project Steering Committee and Working Group. Members are encouraged to send nominations to [district27@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:district27@cfa.vic.gov.au).

I will return to the Latrobe Valley, tentatively scheduled for week commencing 6 October, to further address the questions and issues raised during Wednesday’s session. Once scheduled the date, time and location details of this briefing will be made available to all members ASAP.

*“..Government will establish a new Latrobe City CFA District to lead and manage fire brigades within the City of Latrobe. This will enhance CFA’s ability to work with industry and the community to build its capability and to prevent and respond to fires in the region.”*

- Deputy Premier Peter Ryan