



2 December 2013

'Bushfire Scenario' packs them in!

'What if it's Warrandyte?' was the question on the minds of Warrandyte mums, dads and grandparents packing the hall of Anderson's Creek School to be taken through a two hour bushfire simulation in Warrandyte.

The workshop, part of the Warrandyte Community Association's 'Be Ready Warrandyte - Living with Bushfire Risk' program, attracted 265 participants.

The simulated bushfire, starting in a heavily bushed area south of Eltham, did not follow what many thought would be its expected track – it was designed to challenge assumptions and test residents' plans and preconceptions.

How will you know what is happening? What is your trigger to leave? What clothing will you wear? What if things go wrong? Expect the unexpected.

Lew Wilson, Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator at Manningham Council, guided the workshop through the scenario, questioning a panel of local Emergency Officers and Schools as to what their responses, warnings and actions would be at any point.

He was assisted by Warrandyte resident Bruce Turner, from Phoenix Facilitation, who questioned residents as to what they would be doing and whether they had adequate Fire Plans.

Anderson's Creek Primary School Principal Trevor Gibbs said that they had a comprehensive emergency management plan in place to care for the children in the event of a bushfire.

Barry Holding, from the Creekside Retirement Co-operative in Warrandyte, said that the workshop made him think a bit more about what they were going to do. "We plan to leave early – but what is our trigger to leave?"

Regional and local volunteer CFA, Police, Local Government, Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries officers sat on the emergency services panel whilst senior police and Department of Justice personnel were observers in the audience.

WCA President Dick Davies said that residents and emergency services gained valuable insights from the workshop.

"While some people haven't thought it through, others at the event are beyond the 'awareness' stage and want more detailed information."

"For example, there was much discussion about information on iPod and website apps – the CFA Fire Ready app and WCA Warrandyte Fire Watch app – but the emergency services caution against over reliance on apps."



"You must also pick up cues from the environment and other sources, listen to the radio – use the car radio if you don't have a battery operated one."

Mr Davies said that the 'Be Ready Warrandyte' committee would consider generating further information on how to use apps properly – getting the settings right and so on.

Thirty participants took the opportunity after the event to experience what their reactions would be like undertaking a simple task in totally dark room with noise (from headphones) to simulate an emergency situation, albeit without the added problem of heat from fire.

Further information on this event and bushfire planning generally is available on the WCA website: www.warrandyte.org.au/fire/

The WCA 'Be Ready Warrandyte' project was funded by the Victorian Government's former *Fire Ready Communities Grants Program*. Manningham Council, Nillumbik Council, the Warrandyte Community Bank and the Community Market Committee have also provided funding support.

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Be Ready Warrandyte – Living with Bushfire Risk is a project of Warrandyte Community Association Inc.