



Media Release
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Victoria shares lessons learned from Black Saturday with Tasmanian councils

Tasmanian councils were given an invaluable insight into managing natural disaster relief and recovery today, hearing some of the lessons learned from Black Saturday in Victoria in 2009 at the LGAT Annual Conference.

In just a few hours on 7 February 2009, the rural Victorian municipality of Murrindindi was decimated by bushfires, with 40 per cent of the shire's land area burnt, 95 lives lost and the destruction of community facilities, businesses and more than 1200 homes.

Manager of Community Engagement with the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner of Victoria, Anne Leadbeater, said the devastating effect of the fires exceeded all previous experience and planning.

Ms Leadbeater, who was working for Murrindindi Shire Council at the time of the fires, said the disaster highlighted the critical importance of delivering honest, accurate and consistent information to affected communities in times of crises.

"Open and transparent partnerships and collaboration with government, emergency services, NGOs and the local community was essential to achieving a meaningful and sustainable recovery," Ms Leadbeater said.

"Recognising and tapping into local knowledge and experience, working with the natural leaders in communities and building on existing strengths and capacity is vital in all facets of emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

"One of the things that councils in particular can do is to identify those elements of their local communities that mattered to residents before the disaster, and to reconnect with those things so people can get back to living a life they have reason to value."

Ms Leadbeater explored the recovery model established for the communities of the Kinglake Ranges following the fires, providing a rare, practical example of disaster relief for councils in Tasmania.

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