

# Media Release



Thursday, 12 November, 2009

## Western Water reinforces bushfire message at Riddells Creek as hydrant backlog clears

Western Water will be among many local and state agencies represented at this weekend's Bushfire Expo at Riddells Creek.

Managing Director John Wilkinson said Western Water would have a stand at the expo with important information for people living in bushfire prone areas of the Macedon Ranges.

"Woodend, Macedon and Mount Macedon are nominated priority towns by the State Government in this region and there has been an extra focus on preparing these townships and their residents for this year's fire season," Mr Wilkinson said.

"Western Water is now well underway in clearing the backlog of fire hydrant repairs in these towns and will have completed all works at Macedon, Mount Macedon and Woodend by Christmas.

"The new Adopt a Hydrant program is getting terrific support from the community and Western Water has been following up on all reports it receives from Councils, the CFA and the public."

Mr Wilkinson said it is vital that hydrants and access points to fire-fighting water are kept clear and maintained so the CFA can get in there and do their job.

"Quick, decisive action in an emergency will save lives and property," Mr Wilkinson said.

He said Western Water's bushfire planning included:

- Back-up generators at key sites, including major pumping stations and water sources;
- Dedicated, transportable generators on standby;
- A minimum of 60% capacity maintained in reservoirs in the high-risk fire areas of Macedon Ranges to enable gravity-fed supplies even if power supply is cut;
- Storage tank levels maintained at minimum 85% capacity throughout summer in readiness for sudden increases in demand;
- Water carters on standby to transport emergency water supplies
- Town protection plans developed in collaboration with the CFA
- Public education campaign in collaboration with the CFA.

"Western Water's commissioning of a \$2.35 million storage tank at Loch Road, Mount Macedon, will increase storage capacity sevenfold, from 450,000 litres to 3.5 million litres," he said.

"This means more water is available for firefighting purposes."

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### About Western Water

Western Water is one of Victoria's 13 regional urban water corporations. We provide water, recycled water and sewerage services to over 53,000 properties and 134,810 people in an area of 3,000 square kilometres. Our region extends from Lancefield in the north to Melton and Rockbank in the south and from Myrning in the west to Bulla in the east. We incorporate parts of Hume City Council and Melton, Moorabool and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils.

### Media contacts

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However, Mr Wilkinson warned that, despite these efforts, extreme circumstances may prevent Western Water's ability to maintain water pressure or an uninterrupted water supply during bushfire.

"Loss of electricity may cause pumps transferring water across the region to fail, for example," he said.

"Also, extreme peaks in demand for water from residents and the CFA during a bushfire may cause a drop in pressure through the pipe networks."

Mr Wilkinson said Western Water has dedicated crews on standby to make urgent repairs to water mains and hydrants as necessary during a bushfire.

"Also, water restrictions are waived in the advent of such crises," he said.

"But, despite all our best contingency plans, there can be no individual guarantees and everyone needs to be fire-ready – to prepare their homes and families and to make sure their top priority is to survive."

## Tips for fire season

### **Adopt a Hydrant**

It is important that local fire hydrants are kept clear and visible at all times. You can assist in maintaining the hydrant nearest your property by:

- Clearing soil, grass and shrubs from around the hydrant
- Keeping vehicles clear of the hydrant
- Reporting any visible faults, damage or missing marker posts to your local Council or Western Water.

Residents concerned about their local fire hydrants can contact **Western Water** on **1300 650 422**.

### **Water supply**

In the event of a bushfire, if you intend to defend your property, be prepared with an available independent water supply if mains water becomes limited or unavailable.

Ideally, you would install a tank specifically for fire-fighting purposes. Alternatively you could investigate the possibility of pumping from large volumes of water around your property, such as a swimming pool or a dam.

To draw water from an independent water supply, a petrol or diesel fire-fighting pump is needed. Consult a pump specialist to determine the size of pump and fittings you require. Hoses for use in the event of a bushfire should be able to reach all areas of your home.

### **Communication**

Equip your home with battery-powered or wind-up appliances, including torches and radios tuned to ABC Radio. Make sure laptops and portable phones are fully charged.

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