



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

ROYAL COMMISSION PLANS REGIONAL HEARINGS

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission will hold public hearings in two country towns later this month.

The first hearings will be held in Myrtleford starting on Monday, 14 September, and will investigate the fire that started in Beechworth on 7 February and impacted on surrounding communities, resulting in the deaths of two people and substantial property losses.

These hearings will continue until Wednesday, 16 September.

The Royal Commission will then travel to Horsham and will hold hearings on Thursday and Friday of the same week, 17 and 18 September, to investigate the fires that threatened the Horsham and Coleraine areas and caused substantial property damage.

The Royal Commission has decided to hold hearings in Horsham and Myrtleford because of their distance from Melbourne.

“We feel it is appropriate that the Commission travel to the communities rather than for all the relevant witnesses to have to make the trip to and from Melbourne,” said the Commission Chair Bernard Teague.

The Myrtleford and Horsham hearings will follow a similar pattern to the Commission’s normal hearings at 222 Exhibition Street in Melbourne.

“It is our intention to ensure these regional hearings are as accessible to the public as possible,” said Commissioner Teague, “and we will continue to allow the proceedings to be videotaped for transmission by the television networks.”

In keeping with normal practice, transcripts of the evidence will be posted on the Commission’s website. However, the proceedings will not be web-streamed.

The Commission is also planning, at a later date, to hold hearings in Gippsland into the Churchill fires which claimed the lives of 11 people.

Hearings into the other fires being investigated by the Commission will be held at 222 Exhibition Street.

Venues for regional hearings:

Beechworth fire – Savoy Sporting Club, Great Alpine Road, Myrtleford.

Horsham and Coleraine fires – Glen Logan, 36-39 Dooen Road, Horsham.

The sitting times for the hearings are still to be finalised.