



2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

8 September 2009

COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE FIRE-RELATED DEATHS

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission is to examine the causes and circumstances of the deaths that occurred as a result of the Black Saturday bushfires.

The hearings will start on Monday, 21 September, and will continue periodically for the duration of the Commission.

The information obtained through the hearings will be of particular assistance to the Commission in its further evaluation of the “stay or go” policy.

One hundred and seventy three people died as a result of the Black Saturday fires and, unlike previous major Victorian fires, many perished in and around their homes.

“It has always been our intention to look at the circumstances surrounding these deaths”, said Commissioner Bernard Teague.

“The Commission’s terms of reference require us to investigate ways to preserve life and this means we must look closely at the evidence and circumstances surrounding the tragic events of 7 February.”

Due to their sensitive nature, some hearings may be closed to the public and the media. On other occasions, the hearings will be open but they will not normally be web-streamed and television and stills cameras will not normally be permitted.

Transcripts will generally be made available, but are likely to be posted to our website later than usual due to the need to remove personal information to protect individuals’ privacy.

All evidence led before the Commission will be made available to the Coroner to assist in the coronial process which will be completed after the Royal Commission has finished its work and after all proceedings arising out of the Police investigations are concluded.

Contact is now being made with next of kin, and counsellors and Royal Commission staff will be on hand to support bereaved family and friends throughout the proceedings.

The hearings will be conducted in the Annexe, Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street, Melbourne.

Detail of the hearings will be made available on www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au.

For further information, please contact Quentin Fogarty, Public Affairs Manager 0421 084 089.