



2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMISSION ENDS INQUIRY INTO FIRE-RELATED DEATHS

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission today completed its inquiries into the deaths of the 173 people who perished as a result of the fires of 7 February 2009.

A total of 86 hearings were held over 23 days and were attended by more than 450 family members, friends and colleagues.

“We realise it was extremely difficult and emotional for many of these people to listen to the details surrounding the deaths of their loved ones,” said the Chair of the Commission, the Hon. Bernard Teague AO.

“They have suffered a great loss and we thank them for their attendance.”

Commissioner Teague said the Commission needed to conduct a close examination of all the deaths on 7 February 2009 to assist it in re-evaluating the ‘prepare, stay and defend or leave early’ policy as it applied on Black Saturday.

“The hearings have assisted us greatly in this respect,” he said.

Commissioners Ron McLeod AM and Susan Pascoe AM joined Commissioner Teague in thanking various individuals and organisations for their contributions.

“Firstly we would like to thank the State Coroner and her staff for their early input and advice to ensure our processes would complement, rather than duplicate the coronial process,” they said.

“Our thanks also to Victoria Police for their dignified and professional approach, particularly Detective Superintendent Paul Hollowood who presented all the police evidence in these hearings.”

The Commissioners also praised the work of the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement which provided support to the families who attended the hearings.

“In addition we would like to thank all Commission personnel involved. It has been an enormous challenge for everyone connected with these hearings.”

The Commission will continue to hear final oral submissions this Friday and again next week, concluding on Thursday 27 May.

The Commission will deliver its final report to the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser AC, on Saturday, 31 July.

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