High Fire Danger Days & Bushfire Procedures

**Code Red Fire Danger Days**

St Thomas More’s PS has been listed on the “Bushfire At Risk Register”. Consequently, in accordance with Government and CEO policy, the school will be closed on days that are declared as ‘Code Red- Catastrophic Fire Danger days’. Where possible the school should receive 3 days notice of closure from the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria however families should expect that, in some instances, fewer than three days notice may be provided. Once the final decision has been made, this decision will not change.

*Confirmation of school closure will usually be in the form of a notice home on the day the information is received by the school however parents may be confident that on declared Code Red days the school will be closed and staff will not be in attendance.*

*The list of Catholic school closures will also be published on the CECV’s website* <www.cecv.catholic.edu.au>

Notification of cancelling, rescheduling or recalling off-site activities, such as camps and excursions, will be provided to families as soon as possible, as well as information about the cancellation or changes to bus transport routes.

**Total Fire Ban**

On other days of Total Fire Ban, the school will be open (however families would be expected to follow their own fire plans on Severe and Extreme fire danger days which may include non-attendance at school)

The following procedures will be in place on Total Fire Ban days:

- Students and staff will remain on the school grounds (excursions will be cancelled)
- Parents are requested to ring the school by 9am if their child/ren is absent
- Attendance rolls to be taken by 9am
- Office staff to print out hard copy of electronic rolls by 9:30am and follow up the whereabouts of any unaccounted for children
- Emergency Procedure Manuals to be checked and kept in an accessible location
- Students are encouraged to have a full water bottle in their classrooms
• The Deputy Principal (or other staff member designated by the Principal) will monitor the radio and CFA website for information about any incidents likely to impact upon the school.

In the event of a bushfire in the local area our usual emergency procedures would be followed. Students and staff would remain inside the building, all children to be accounted for. Evacuation from the school site is unlikely and would only be considered by the Principal in extraordinary circumstances (such as direction from emergency services or other relevant information). Potential difficulty in obtaining buses to transport students & staff, congested roads and the safety of being on the road in a bushfire are all factors which would make evacuation unlikely.

If, however, it did become necessary to leave the school site, the school would attempt to communicate the evacuation destination with parents by phone or text message however it is recognized that communication services are notoriously difficult in bushfire situations. Other potential forms of communication could be 774 radio station or the school website however the first priority will always be the safety and supervision of students.

Parents continue to have the right to collect their child/ren in an emergency situation however parents should not endanger themselves or, potentially, their own children by being in a car in a bushfire situation. It may be safer to leave the children at school rather than to collect them. Parents who arrive to collect children must go via the office. Parents are expected to remain calm to maintain an orderly, safe environment and minimise distress in their children and others. The need for calm also extends to the carpark where everyone is to show extra care and caution when arriving and departing from the school.

The school needs to account for the whereabouts and safety of all students at all times therefore no child will be released until they are signed out by a parent or emergency contact (as listed on their file). Families should regularly review those who they have currently listed as emergency contacts, bearing in mind their ability and availability to reach the school. Parents also need to have a clear understanding with their emergency contacts regarding the arrangements and responsibilities for that contact in an emergency situation.