

YOUR SAY

Autumn break



Eve FISHER

IT will be a long time before any of us forget this bushfire season.

Seeing residents and tourists huddling on Mallacoota's wharf — among other terrifying sights — will surely remain etched in the memories of those of us watching from afar through the media's lens.

We can only imagine what those on the fire ground must be going through as they witness the loss of human and animal life, and the unforgettable trauma that must come with seeing homes and livelihoods turned to ash.

As we always see in Australia, communities — both near the fires and far away — have been galvanised by a crisis that has been punctuated by heroes and zeros (that's you, Scott Morrison).

Despite the continually unfolding tragedy, good news stories are always plentiful — the teenagers filling their car with rescued koalas, the resounding applause for international firefighters arriving at the airport, comedian Celeste Barber's ridiculously successfully \$50 million fundraiser.

Of course there are companies quickly wading into the crisis ostensibly to raise money for those at the coal face (pardon the pun), although I suspect plenty of them care more for the marketing value

to their business than actually helping those in need. Still, money is money.

If you want to see a real example of selflessness check out the scores of kids raising thousands of dollars through lemonade stands and cake stalls.

Stories about solutions, however, are a bit more thin on the ground.

There has been plenty of political outrage but few realistic ideas that could be implemented with minimum of fuss.

Then Professor David Bowman wrote a game-changing piece in *The Conversation*. His message was simple: it's time to move our summer holidays.

As Prof Bowman — an expert of pyrogeography and fire science at the University of Tasmania — adeptly points out, sending thousands of holidaymakers into our most dangerous bushfire-prone areas at the riskiest time of year would have to be one of our more

stupid national pastimes. Between Christmas and the end of January holidaymakers flood into fire-prone areas, putting themselves at risk and also creating increased fire danger simply by being there.

Everything should be done to avoid having tourists caught up in bushfire emergencies. Removing the hordes during peak fire season is the first step.

Often national parks are closed during extreme fire days and this idea expands on that thinking.

When fires do break out, firefighters should only have to worry about saving residents, and their homes and towns. During mass evacuations emergency services shouldn't be worrying about scores of tourists refusing to leave until the last minute for fear of their holiday being cut short.

I know of East Gippsland tourists who didn't move despite an actual evacuation order in place.

I know others who complained about hours-long petrol queues be-

cause they didn't get out when urged, or even worse, kept heading to danger zones despite the risk. Another bunch of tourists complained about being displaced in Mallacoota and having to get a ship home without a bed to sleep on. Oh the horror.

Who do these people think they are?

As much as the tourist dollar is welcome for most of the year, it means absolutely nothing when their presence might mean the difference between life and death.

Which is why Prof Bowman's idea is genius.

This is the nature of climate change adaptation, he points out, and it makes sense.

The school year should run from May to March, with two weeks at Christmas and six weeks in the cooler, calmer months of March and April.

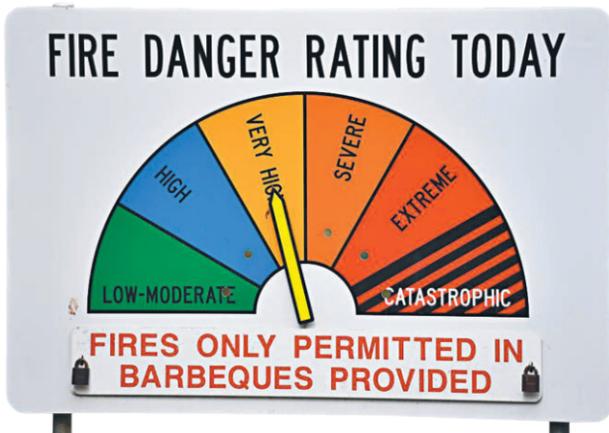
The autumn weather is warm and stable enough for beach lovers yet those months have far fewer extreme fire danger days, if any.

The change would take the pressure off emergency services, reduce fire risk, extend the holiday season to include Easter and would have minimal impact on teachers and tourism operators.

Europe and the US have the school year starting in September. There is no reason ours couldn't start in late April or May.

This disastrous fire season has shown we need to change the status quo and start thinking outside the square.

Moving our summer holiday period could be the place to start.



Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL

Fix up dump mess

A MERE day after the City of Greater Geelong said it was considering taking VCAT action against an illegal rubbish dump in Lara, we reveal the shocking dump that is growing out at Point Henry.

City Hall has said the site is one of its biggest problem areas for litter and dumped waste — requiring weekly inspections — while Bellarine MP Lisa Neville has ordered the Environment Protection Authority to step in and ensure action.

What is wrong with people? Are tip fees so expensive we are resorting to dumping our filth in paddocks and on the foreshore? Is there no pride left in our surrounding areas?

Apart from the unsightly mess we are creating, public dumping grounds such as Point Henry are coming at a cost to us all, with ratepayers forking out more than \$760,000 to clean up these messes.

And while Alcoa no longer operates at the site, it cannot completely turn its back on it either. While the company still owns the land, it has a responsibility to ensure it is not turned into a tip.

Ours is a beautiful region, and Point Henry commands some of the best views in Geelong. We can do better than turning our city into a dump site.

ADDY READERS HAVE THEIR SAY - LETTERS AND TEXTS

DON'T LEAVE CHILDREN IN HOT CARS OVER SUMMER

TWO weeks ago, about 11am on a Saturday, I was astounded to walk past a car parked on High St, Belmont, with a young child alone in the back seat and the keys in the ignition with the motor running.

This Saturday was a day forecast to be in the mid-30s and I had to take a second look to believe what I was seeing. Eventually, a male approached with a girl I estimated to be about 11-12 and proceeded to get into the vehicle.

I approached him and said, "Mate, I don't want to be seen to be a sticky beak but the fact is the young girl has been left in a car on a hot day and, secondly, anyone could have jumped into that car and we'd be having another William Tyrell incident on our hands! What were you thinking?"

He bowed his head and sheepishly let out a, "Yeah, I know", before driving away in his purple-coloured car.

I was too stunned to think about getting his registration number but I

did report the incident to police and I only hope his wife has heard about this as well.

Children are precious, please treat them accordingly.

Stunned local, Belmont

ALARM OVER CHARCOAL IS MISLEADING

TO clarify re your story on campers (GA, 11/1). I work at Eastern Beach and the waterfront every day. I have never seen open fires or evidence of these.

The charcoal is leftover from braziers responsibly placed in the pooled water from a tap near barbecues to completely douse them.

I like to see the many cultures and all their different foods here as has been the case for generations.

David Smith, Belmont

HOMES INVITE DISASTER WITH THEIR SITING

RECENTLY I had cause to visit a home in Anglesea adjacent to the

upper boundary of the Anglesea Golf Club.

I was appalled to find most of the properties in the area set well into the bush with foliage either up to, touching or overhanging the dwellings — a fire trap if ever I saw one. Apparently the authorities must condone this situation and the owners complacent.

Memories of Ash Wednesday have surely been forgotten.

Adam Broadfoot, Grovedale

EMERGENCY DECLARATION LETS COUNCIL PREPARE

AUSTRALIA has just had the hottest and driest year on record. The current bushfire crisis is unprecedented. These fires roll on through the hot and very dry environment. Rainforests are so dry they are burning.

The circumstances of these fires align with the predictions made by scientists over the past 20 years. Cutting world carbon emissions to zero by 2050 will not be enough to avoid a 1.5 to 2C temperature rise. Projects that actually remove CO₂ from the

atmosphere will be necessary. We must proceed to zero emissions with great speed and then start to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere.

The mayor and councillors who voted against declaring a climate emergency must reconsider their position. The point made by climate deniers is: what difference would it make to declare a climate emergency? The declaration would indicate to all CoGG managers the urgency of the situation. They would have to put climate change and its impact at the centre of their work and planning. As an example, if a climate emergency had been declared officers would have prepared a disaster plan. It would have assessed whether the resources needed to fight fires in our region were available and if not decide what had to be done to increase the resources. If the region was organised to handle large numbers of fire refugees in the event of a major fire. If we in the Barwon region have a fire emergency one feels the CoGG will be caught unprepared.

Peter Berrisford, Drysdale

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1797 - James Hetherington, a London haberdasher, is fined for wearing his newest creation — the top hat.

1892 - A Massachusetts magazine publishes the rules for a new game — basketball.

1943 - The Pentagon opens outside Washington DC. It is the world's largest office building, with 27 km of corridors.

1958 - Darwin gets connected for the first time; mail is delivered to individual addresses and direct telephone dialling is introduced.

1959 - The TV Week Awards, soon to be renamed the Logies, are presented for the first time.

1967 - The first Super Bowl is played as the Green Bay Packers defeat the Kansas City Chiefs 35-10.

ADDY ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question: Should Harry retain the title of Prince if he steps away from the monarchy?

YES 33% NO 67%

Register your vote at geelongadvertiser.com.au

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