



Colac Otway  
SHIRE

# Personal Perspective

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Jamieson Track Fire-Wye River  
Bushfire



# Participants in EH Response

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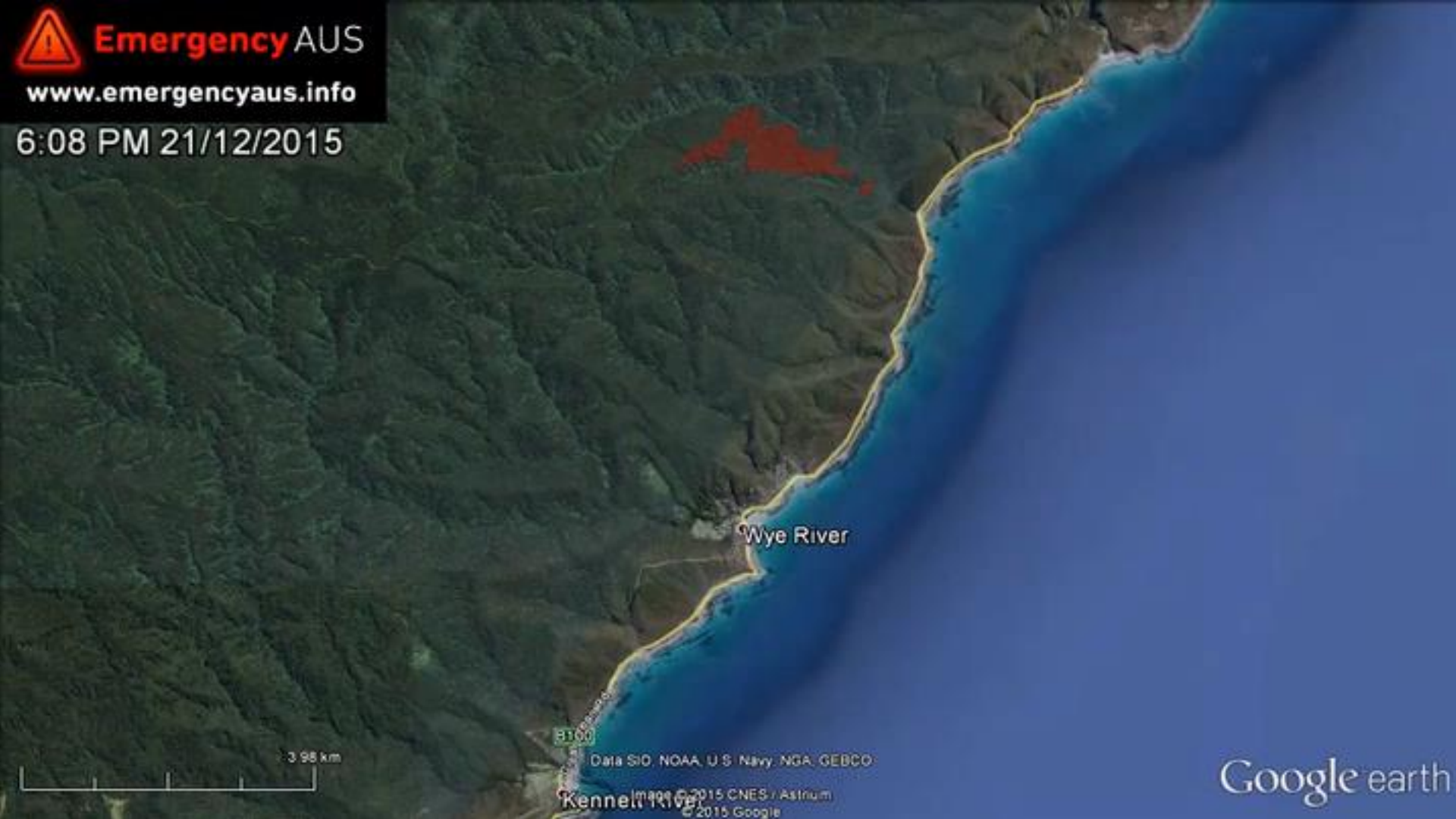
Matthew White



# Jamieson Track-Wye River Bushfire 2015

- 19<sup>th</sup> December, two bushfires ignited by lightning
- 25<sup>th</sup> December, settlements of Kennet River, Separation Creek and Wye River threatened by bushfire. Settlements of Separation Creek and Wye River partially burnt
- 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016, public allowed to return
- 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016, bushfire declared contained











Footage: ABC News *Properties are destroyed and more than 2,000 hectares is burnt along Victoria's coast*

Updated 19 Feb 2016, 6:26pm

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-12-26/properties-destroyed,-more-than-2,000-hectares/7054836>



# Settlement Context

## Kennet River, Wye River & Separation Creek

- Limited access to the settlements
- Densely packed
- Steep terrain
- Challenging access to properties
- Primarily holiday community
- A high proportion of influential property owners
- Wye River water quality an ongoing concern
- Significant pressure to allow holiday trading to continue.
- Limited mobile coverage



# Activities undertaken

- Mass gathering assessments
- Post impact assessments
- Assessing regulated businesses
- Ensuring water security so that
  - Residents have uncontaminated water supply
  - Business have uncontaminated water supply
  - Business *have* a water supply.
- Participating in activities
  - Mass geotechnical and LCA report for affected properties





# Mass Gathering Assessments

Straight forward assessment for mass gatherings;

- ✓ Food safety
- ✓ Overcrowding
- ✓ Ablution
- ✓ Vector control
- ✓ Waste disposal





# Why Assess?

- ✓ Up to 600 firefighters in one camp, and 300 in another.
- ✓ At least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Victorian firefighters and some interstate firefighters.
- ✓ One case of gastro would shut the camp down at a minimum.





## Assessment outcome

- ✓ Potential food storage issues.
- ✓ Laundering of bed sheets not fully considered
- ✓ Wastewater solutions ordinary



# Settlement Preliminary Assessment

- ✓ A number of hazards
- ✓ No industry/commercial debris or contaminants
- ✓ Sufficient sanitary facilities at the settlements
- ✓ **Still an active fire site!**









# Hazards

















## Assessing Regulated businesses

- Wye Beach Hotel
- Wye General Store
- Wye Surf Life Saving Club
- Big 4 Wye River Caravan Park
- Wye River Foreshore Caravan Park
- Kennet River Caravan Park
- Koala Cafe

## Concerns

- ✓ Spoilt food
- ✓ Putrescible waste disposal
- ✓ Food handling
- ✓ Potable water supply from Wye River
- ✓ Recreational use of rivers



# Water Security

## Domestic rain water supplies

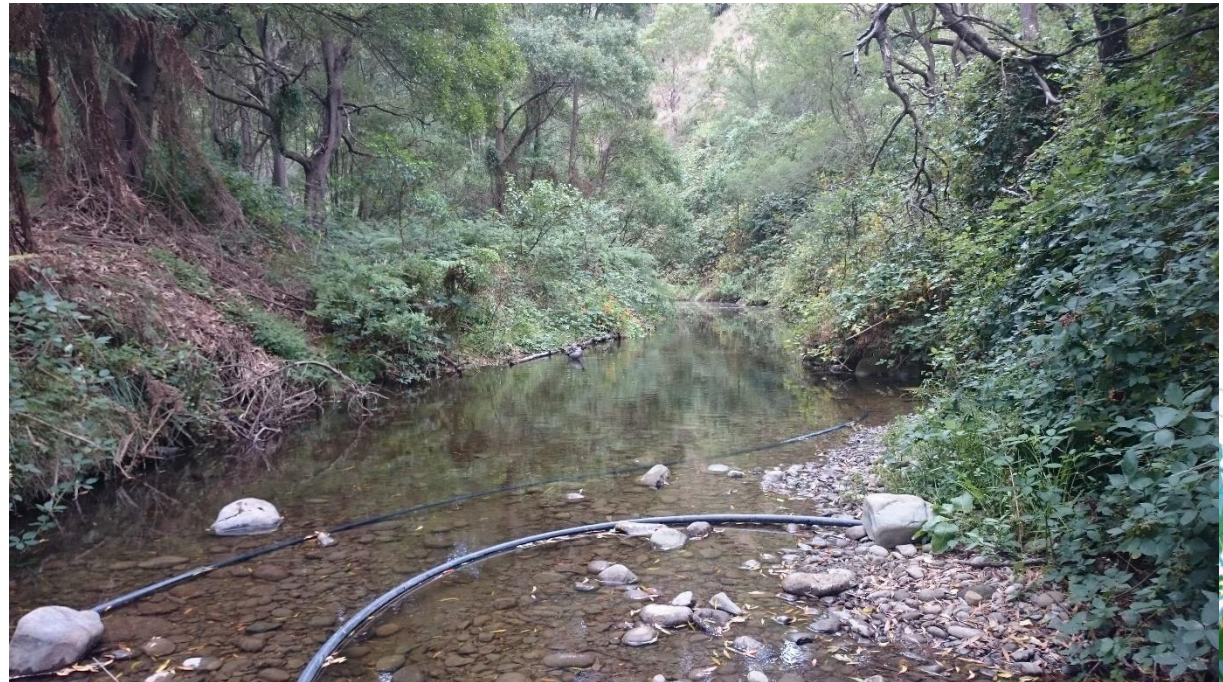
- Administration of roof clean, tank clean and replacement 5000L program

## Recreational use

- Liaising with EPA on contamination investigation.

## Commercial river water supplies

- River water quality impact on potable supplies
- Water supply provision





# Domestic Water Tank

## Clean and replacement

### 5000L of water

- Fear early on that rainwater tanks had been contaminated with fire retardant chemicals
- As of February, 212 property owners had registered
- Involved process
  - Roof clean
  - Tank(s) emptied
  - Tanks cleaned
  - 5000 L replacement
- Challenging working conditions
  - Heights
  - Accessibility
  - Narrow unsealed roads
  - Risk of landslip preventing discharge of water
  - As alleged contaminated water, could not be discharged to the river





# Recovery Overview

- Transition – Response to Recovery – 9 January 2016
- COS Bushfire Recovery Division
- Development of draft recovery actions
- Communications and community engagement planning
- One Stop Shop – Apollo Bay, Wye River, Melbourne
- Local business and tourism engagement
- Planning legislation – stream line process
- Community meetings
- Community Resilience Committee



# COS Context

- No COS field staff available for PIA
- Work management systems cumbersome requiring high levels of manual intervention.
- Unit undergoing change
- Coordinator had some EM experience, limited in EH.
- Part of BSW Region EH group



# Learnings to Share

## Prepare

- Practice public health emergency incident assessments. ERC training and EM overviews are not enough.
- Make sure your incident response plan is useable
- Network
- Arrange a standardised property marking protocol with other PIA units
- Incident response kits with stand-alone equipment e.g. radios for coms



# Learnings to Share

## Don't be rushed

- Plan your field work
- Make sure your data collection tool is fit for purpose and *outcome*.
- Have suitable PPE





# Learnings to Share

Be assertive and proactive

- Don't wait to be activated/directed.
  - MECC will be concerned with the ERC,
  - ICC will be focused on their specialties Parks/Fire/Police.
- Other agencies will make decisions that make your life more difficult.
- invite yourself to meetings



# Learnings to Share

Delegate and ask for help.

- Utilise your neighbours
- Contact your REHO and regional DHHS resources immediately. Thanks Bree, Rodney and Helen.
- You will receive many offers of help. Only delegate to those who have suitable knowledge and experience.





# Learnings to Share

Delegate and ask for help

- Good housekeeping and systems make delegation easier
- Public health response management will require more work than one person can sustain. Divvy up tasks and functions.



# Learnings to Share

## Just Say NO

- If a task involves anything that may be considered 'Health' someone will try and give it to you.
- Tasks that don't require your EH Knowledge
- Tasks that you may comment on as a matter of policy or public health directive, but in execution do not require, EH expertise.





# Recovery



# Questions

