



Media release

The Hon Dr Denis Napthine MP

Premier
Minister for Regional Cities
Minister for Racing

Monday 3 March 2014

Premier announces business assistance for Morwell

- **Premier announces \$2 million fund to provide assistance directly to businesses affected by Hazelwood fire**
- **45 vacant holidays homes registered to help Morwell residents**
- **Zoos Victoria is offering free entry to Melbourne, Werribee and Healesville Zoos for Morwell residents**

A range of initiatives to assist businesses affected by the ongoing fire at the Hazelwood open cut mine, including access to grants and concessional loans, have been announced today in Morwell by Premier Denis Napthine.

Dr Napthine said the additional support measures would also include specialised coaching and advice for small business owners, and was in addition to the personal hardship and relocation grants of up to \$1,250 that have already been announced.

“The Victorian Coalition Government is setting up a \$2 million fund to provide assistance directly to businesses that have been affected as a result of the ongoing fire within the Hazelwood open cut mine,” Dr Napthine said.

“We understand that this is an unusual and unexpected situation that has caused unique challenges for the Latrobe Valley community and businesses in Morwell.

“We have asked the Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) to administer this fund, which will make grants of between \$1,000 and \$10,000 available to owner-managers of actively trading businesses who employ fewer than 20 people and can demonstrate loss as a result of the situation in Morwell.

“The application process will be open throughout March with an independent panel of business specialists to begin assessments over coming weeks.”

Dr Napthine said specialised advice from Small Business Victoria would also be available to offer further support in Morwell.

“A mobile unit from Small Business Victoria is in Morwell today and will conduct a number of individual sessions with business owners as well as group information seminars over coming days,” Dr Napthine said.

“Low-interest concessional loans of up to \$200,000 will also be made available to businesses who have been affected by the February 2014 fires under the jointly funded Commonwealth-State National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.”

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Dr Napthine also said a number of Victorians had made their vacant holiday properties available to Morwell residents seeking to relocate from the smoke, with 45 registrations so far.

“It is great to see the Victorian community extending a helping hand to the people in Morwell,” Dr Napthine said.

“I would encourage all Victorians with a vacant holiday property to consider making it available and to contact Tourism Victoria and register their interest by phoning 1300 366 356.

“I can also announce that Zoos Victoria is offering free entry to Melbourne, Werribee and Healesville Zoos to people from Morwell who are seeking to take a break from the smoke.”

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