

ACA Member Bulletin: Victorian Bushfires – update re cancellations

Australian Camps Association – Industry Updates and News

Date: 18 February 2009

Dear members

It seems there have been some mixed messages getting to schools about whether they should postpone or cancel their scheduled camps in the coming weeks. Some of our members are being told that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in Victoria have advised them to postpone all camps in Victoria until after term one.

I have been in contact with a number of people in an attempt to clarify this and I will continue to pursue it until we get a reasonable response.

I have spoken directly to the Community and Stakeholder Relations branch of the DEECD and they have assured me that no advice has been issued from head office suggesting that camps should be postponed or cancelled and that their advice remains that the school should check the CFA/DSE websites for any alerts or warnings and should also contact the camp to discuss the situation before making a decision based on the information they gather. Their advice to me is that the decision should be made by the individual school.

Some of my information suggested that it was the Emergency Services Management (ESM) branch of the DEECD that have been advising Regional Offices that they should advise schools to postpone or cancel camps until after term one. I contacted ESM directly to ask them if this was the case. They denied offering any such advice and they assured me that the advice they are giving is that schools should consult the CFA/DSE websites and contact the camp to discuss the current situation before making a decision based on the information they have gathered.

I am currently working on getting this advice in writing so that we are clearer about where we stand. I will also try to get the DEECD, via the Regional Director in each of the nine regions, to put this advice in writing to their schools so that there is clarity and consistency in the advice being given.

At the time of writing this Member Bulletin I had not heard back from the DEECD but as soon as I have more information I will let you know. I understand that this is an important issue for our members and I have tried to impress on the DEECD the importance of this and the potential impact if there is not clarity and consistency of advice and the importance of having this advice in writing.

David Petherick
Executive Officer