

# Bushfire destroys Banksia woodlands

by LEE OPITZ

**A CARRUM Country Fire Authority unit checked an area of Seaford burned by bushfire on Sunday only 10 minutes before a fire started.**

The bushfire destroyed a 1 km stretch of Seaford bushland in less than an hour.

A call at 12.30 pm brought more than 100 firemen manning 25 Country Fire Authority tankers and four metropolitan units to battle the blaze that stretched from near Eel Race Rd to Station St.

Clouds of flame at times 12 metres high fanned by strong winds destroyed bushland either side of the Frankston railway line.

The Carrum CFA unit had noticed nothing when it patrolled the area just minutes before.

A fireman from the unit said: "We couldn't believe it. We saw nothing during the patrol."

The fire jumped Kananook Creek in places, threatening Nepean Highway homes, but was quickly checked. Police and State Emergency Service units evacuated about 60 elderly residents from centres along the highway up to the Carrum Bowling Club.

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THE Banksia woodlands fire, seen across Kananook Creek north of Armstrong's Rd.

Picture: PHILIP ROWLEY.

Police are investigating the cause of the fire.

Fanned by strong northerly winds, Mr Davey said the fire had extremely "high spotting activity" lighting itself 300 to 500 metres ahead, due to sparks being blown by the wind.

Flames reached heights of more than 26 metres.

Mr Davey said the fire burnt through an area between Eel Race Rd, and Station St abutting Nepean Hwy, on Railway and Dandenong Valley Authority land.



# First came the inferno . . .

by CRAIG DIXON

SUMMER struck the Peninsula with a vengeance last week, contributing to an outbreak of fires, including a potentially disastrous blaze at Seaford.

Frankston fire brigade units attended 27 fires in the week to Tuesday, prompting a grim warning to residents, councils and conservationists from the Country Fire Authority.

"I hope everybody will look on this as a timely warning to everybody to do what they can to reduce the risk of fire," said CFA acting regional officer Bruce Davey.

He said a build-up of dead foliage and brush helped fuel the firestorm that swept through two kilometres of railway bushland at Seaford on Sunday afternoon.

Twenty three units and 200 personnel battled for more than three hours to control the blaze, which started above Armstrongs Rd and within minutes was threatening homes, the Beach House centre for aged and disabled and the Seaford RSL.

Strong northerly winds fanned the fire and flames leapt 30 metres into the air. Several front gardens along Railway Pde were singed and railway tracks and overhead wires damaged.

At one stage, officers were fighting spot fires 100 metres ahead of the main front.

Police acted on a directive from Mr Davey and evacuated 100 Beach House residents and warned homeowners to be ready to move.

"I'd say, conservatively, the flames were 80 feet high and putting out severe radiant heat," said Mr Davey.

"The fire was typical of an area where no fuel reduction had been done for some time."



CFA personnel were still dousing spot fires on railway land at Seaford 20 hours after Sunday's potentially disastrous blaze started . . . that was before the rain.



THE Banksia woodlands fire, seen across Kananook Creek

## . . . and then the flood

IF Seaford residents suddenly burst into a rendition of the James Taylor song Fire and Rain, think nothing of it—they've seen the worst of both this week.

The baysiders must be wondering what they've done to deserve the wrath of the elements.

Twenty-four hours after fighting to save their homes from a blaze which ripped through scrubland along the railway, residents were out with mops and buckets on Monday to keep floodwaters at bay.

Several homes and shops in the area suffered water damage as

storms dumped heavy rain on the Peninsula over a brief period.

Michael Ballintyne, of Ballintyne's Nursery, Seaford, said some of his customers found themselves stranded as a lake suddenly appeared around their cars.

"It was unbelievable how fast the water rose," he said.

The heavy rainfall quickly overwhelmed gutters and drains and spread half-a-metre deep across some streets.

There is no truth to the rumor that Seaford residents are expecting an earthquake any day!

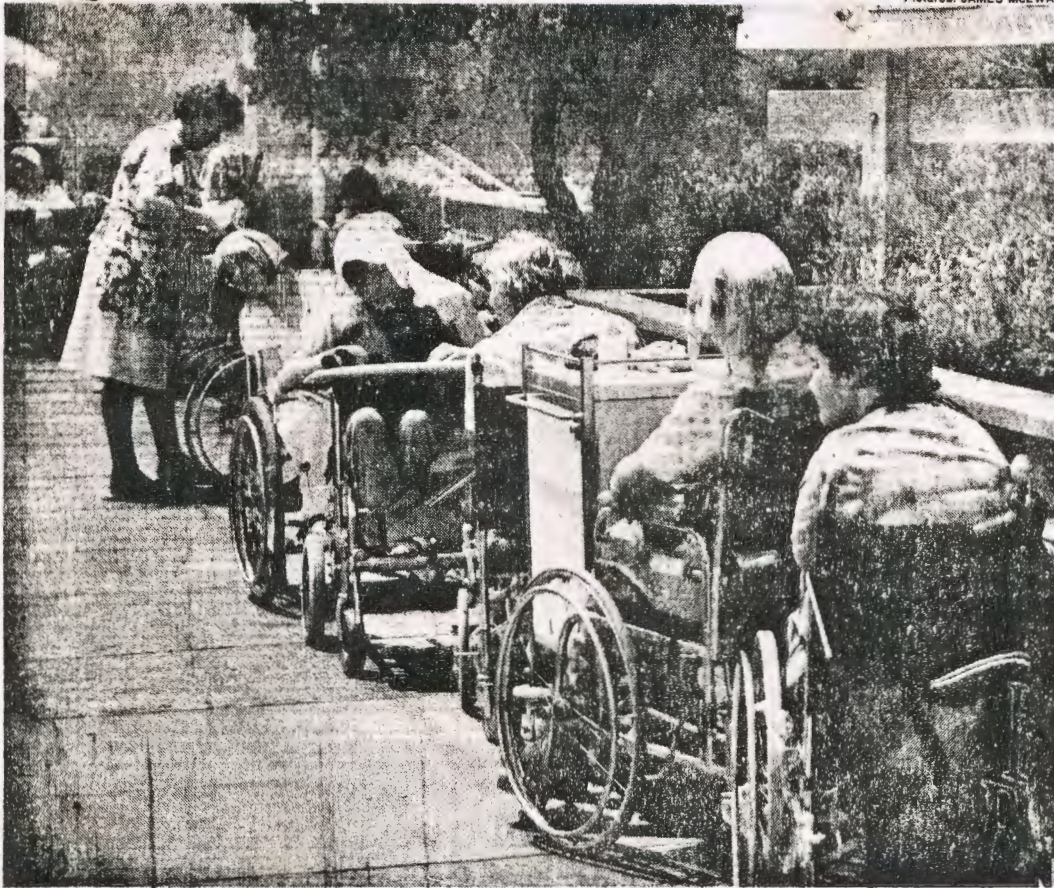




# Fire threatens Seaford residents

Age Front Page 14/11/88

Pictures: JAMES McEWAN



Manager Mrs Maria Treweek puts wet clothes on the heads of residents of 'Beach House' yesterday as they waited to be evacuated after fires threatened housing along the Nepean Highway.

By FIONA HIGGINS

Fire tore through about two kilometres of railway bushland in Seaford yesterday, threatening homes along the Nepean Highway and leaving angry residents exclaiming "It should never have happened".

Elsewhere, high temperatures and fanning winds kept fire-fighters busy throughout the state, with two fires still burning in Gembrook and Upper Pakenham late yesterday evening.

The Seaford fire began along railway lines above Armstrongs Road at about midday and, aided by a strong north-easterly wind, had covered the two kilometres to Station Street in a matter of minutes.

More than 100 Country Fire Authority volunteers, 17 CFA tankers, four Metropolitan Fire Brigade units and several State Emergency Service teams battled for about two hours to control the blaze.

The forecast wind change expected to drive the fire away from the Nepean Highway housing did not arrive, so residents were warned to hose down buildings and be ready to move. More than 100 elderly citizens and disabled people were evacuated to the nearby Carrum Bowling Club.

Firefighters maintained a vigil into the evening as spot fires, fanned by the hot wind, continued to re-ignite. Railway lines and fences were damaged in the blaze.



Fire fighters battle yesterday to douse scrub fires near Seaford.

Many residents angrily suggested that the fire would not have spread had the Frankston council acted quickly on public calls to clear dense scrub around the creek.

"It should never have happened," said one elderly citizen, "We've been at them (Frankston

council) for years to clear those bushes."

But firefighters said the council had already tidied up the area and had probably helped to contain the fire to its thin path.

Scrub and forest fires were still burning south-east of Melbourne last night. About 20 hectares of

## Blaze threat to bay homes

SUN 14/11/88

By BRUCE TOBIN

ABOUT 100 people fled their homes when a large fire raced through scrub and threatened dozens of houses at Seaford yesterday.

The fire burned tea-trees along the railway line and fearful residents hosed down their homes as strong winds blew sparks from the blaze.

Police and 30 State Emergency Service members evacuated people, including many elderly, from a nearby relief centre.

The fire came within 15 metres of the Seaford RSL as members and firemen battled to stop the blaze.

Ian Arnold, 32, joined other RSL members to hose down the building in Station St.

"What we were worried about were sparks getting onto the roof."

Firefighters managed to gain control by pumping water from Kananook Creek and using CFA tankers.

The fire started in thick bush near Eel Race Rd and quickly spread along the side of the railway line.

About 250 Country Fire Authority fire-fighters and 30 units battled the blaze, which flared up about 12.30 pm.

