**Craig Smith:** Hello, and welcome, everyone, to this afternoon’s webinar on the Bushfire Education resources and the Victorian curriculum F-10. My name is Craig Smith. I’m the Unit Manager here at the VCAA for the Victorian curriculum F-10, and I’ll be emceeing today’s session. But before we start, I just want to begin with VCAA’s acknowledgement of country.

We’re all joining today’s session from across Victoria and I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the many lands across Victoria on which each of you are living, learning and working from today. For myself and those of us in the metropolitan area, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Kulin Nations. The Wurundjeri call this Naarm. We call this Melbourne. When acknowledging country, we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s spiritual and cultural connection to country. We acknowledge the continued care of the lands and waterways over generations and celebrate the continuation of a living culture that has a unique role in this region. And as we share our knowledge in teaching and learning, may we pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture and hopes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the nation, and hope they will walk with us on our journey.

I’d also like to point out, from the 8th, which is Sunday, NAIDOC Week begins, so look out for NAIDOC events and, you know, participate. It’s a tremendous week to celebrate the contribution of the First Nation peoples in Australia.

So, today – a quick session overview. This session is an introduction to the Bushfires Education website and its resources. I also want to take the opportunity to introduce colleagues from Victoria’s new fire service, Fire Rescue Victoria, and what the next steps are in regard to the Bushfire education resources and the Victorian curriculum.

So, this afternoon, it’s my great pleasure to welcome our panellists, starting with Leonie Brown – Leonie is Geography Curriculum Manager here at the VCAA. Erin Wilson, who is the VCAA’s science and STEM Curriculum Manager. And it’s my great pleasure to welcome colleagues from Fire Rescue Victoria – Marthese Kavanagh, who is the Public Education Officer, and Mark Crowe, who’s the Acting Station Officer and Community Education Officer at Fire Rescue Victoria.

So, I’m going to jump straight into it, because we’ve got a bit we want to cover this afternoon. Below is a screenshot of the VCAA’s Bushfire Education website. This website came into existence after the 2009 Black Saturday fires. It was specifically recommendation 6 from the royal commission that was held into the events of that Saturday, which, amongst other things, resulted in the loss of 179 Victorians, tremendous amount of property damage, damage to fauna and flora. The idea behind the royal commission was both to get to the bottom of what actually happened, ways of mitigating...or, first of all, understanding more about those events, but also ways of mitigating what we were going to do as a community in the future. One of their recommendations was that all our students should have access to ongoing bushfire education, and that the curriculum was a natural vehicle to conduct this sort of education.

So, in 2011, the VCAA launched its very first version of the Bushfire Education resource. This was refreshed and updated in 2015, and we had another refresh, and updated the various lesson plans and so on, toward the end of 2019. The version that is available today is different from what was up there previously. It was only released yesterday. And a lot of the changes had to do with significantly improving the way the site navigates. It’s easier to use and it’s a whole lot easier to find resources.

So, what is there... Essentially, the Bushfire Education website is organised around these four themes – of learning about bushfires, preparing for bushfires, responding to bushfires and recovering from bushfires. And this is a pretty standard way for disaster education modules to be organised. And what they all try to do is, basically, unpack each of the different components or aspects to do... It’s not just simply around bushfires. It’s also, you know, the science involved around bushfires, that communities do live with bushfire, that there are particular ways a community will respond when a bushfire event occurs. But also, as equally important, what happens afterwards – that communities do come together and recover from bushfires.

If they are organised around those four themes, then the bushfire site is also organised around four levels of schooling. And what I mean by four levels of schooling...

Just give me a sec. Just moving into another slide.

...is that, under early years, or the early years modules, are a number of resources designed for children aged between four to five years of age, but these can be used for students in Prep. The early years materials are aligned to the outcomes in the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, which also known as the VEYLDF. And for those who are familiar with the VEYLDF, it is designed for children from birth through to eight years of age. The lower primary section, or modules, is designed to support the learning needs of students between Prep and Grade 3, with the materials being aligned to the Victorian curriculum Levels 1 and 2. Upper primary is designed to support the learning needs of students in Grades 4 to 6, and it aligns with the Victorian curriculum Levels 5 and 6. The secondary schools level are to support the learning needs of students in Years 7 to 10, and they are aligned to the Victorian curriculum Levels 7 to 8.

One obvious question is, why doesn’t each of these components have material aligned to every level of the Victorian curriculum? What we’ve done when we’ve actually developed the lesson plans – and Leonie will take you through an example of one in a moment – is that we’ve targeted the most relevant parts of the Victorian curriculum. That’s to say, instead of going for a very wide but shallow coverage across the curriculum, we’ve identified the particular parts of the curriculum which pay attention, or can be utilised to explore the themes of the Bushfire Education website.

So, Leonie, I’m going to throw over to you, to take us through a bit more detail of what’s underneath each of these levels and the resources underneath.

**Leonie Brown:** Thank you very much, Craig, for that brief introduction. So, really, the whole idea about the section that I’m going to cover is really giving you some ideas that support you as a classroom teacher in the classroom. How can you use the resources on the Victorian bushfire website to assist you in designing and delivering your teaching and learning program to do with bushfire? And the target audience in this general introduction is those of you who are teaching from F-10, so I’m not going to make any apologies for designing and using particular examples here. So, this is a general introduction, today’s particular session.

So, to kick off helping you make decisions about using the bushfire resource, I’ve actually got six variables here that could actually apply to any of your curriculum decisions about your curriculum planning, and front and centre in that equation is background of students. And this is really, really important in the case of bushfires, because students will range from having absolutely no experience of bushfires through to the absolute opposite end of that. And we’re now in a situation over these last few years that more and more communities are being impacted by bushfires, and, consequently, that means that there are more and more students that may have a varying degree of background experience in that.

It’s not just a matter of going with a geographic...just looking at whereabouts your school is actually located, but, obviously, that would influence your decision. So, obviously, if you’re in a bushfire-prone area, then you may want to take a particular emphasis. If you’re at the other end of the scale – or the other end of the atlas, as I often say – you could be in a situation where you’re in an inner urban environment. But that’s not to say, without taking into consideration your location, that you wouldn’t have students’ backgrounds that may also vary from having little experience to having lots of experience.

So, this is where...and I know as a teacher you are constantly reminded of this, and I’m going to remind you again, that it’s really, really important that you know your students and you understand their needs. So, not just where they live, but also their family circumstances – so, where have they lived previously, where do they holiday? Because you could live in an urban area of inner Melbourne, but you could actually have – and many families do – like, we have beach houses in areas, or areas in the Dandenongs, for instance, which is another high-risk area. So, in that sense, it could well be a situation where you need to know their holiday and their recreational types of things as well. But you also need to know their family backgrounds, because, as I said, it’s an increasingly experience...an increasing experience for students to have some sort of experience of bushfires, and in doing that, you need to actually take into consideration that families may well be impacted on that. So, that covers location and student background.

Something else for you to also keep in mind is, please consider your own teacher background and your confidence in delivering this type of curriculum. So, please make choices to design your teaching and learning program that you’re very comfortable with and that your school is very comfortable with.

Something that I can actually assure you about is the level of resources that are available to actually support this area of the curriculum, and that includes our website. But in doing so, not so many of those resources are so strongly aligned to the Victorian curriculum. So, that’s the real plus of this resource that we have here.

The other question, which I know will be foremost in your mind, is time. And time could be considered as, what time of the year would you like to incorporate this into your teaching and learning program? For instance, you might concentrate towards the end of term 2, or maybe term 3, looking at preparing for bushfires. You may choose to use it as a way that you could demonstrate increasing understanding and knowledge of bushfires, by actually undertaking the study whilst bushfires are occurring.

That is your decision, but it’s a really complicated decision, where you need to take in all the considerations of the community in which you’re working within – so your school community, your classroom community and the general community where you’re actually located.

So, there are several factors that need to be taken into consideration. But having said that, I would still strongly encourage you to explore this really exciting and very worthwhile element of our Victorian curriculum.

So, the way that the Bushfire Education website pages are set up, as Craig set out, it’s...they are...occur in three themes, and the design of the actual page is similar, regardless of the primary resources or the secondary resources. So, I’m going to actually just quickly move through these and concentrate on the last one, to take you through a bit of a walk with one of these pages.

So, theme 1 is learning about bushfires, the second theme is preparing for bushfires, third theme is responding to bushfires, and the fourth theme is recovering from bushfires. Again, just within those themes, depending on the needs of your students and your background, and all those other things I’ve just mentioned, you may choose to actually concentrate on more...more on one of these themes, or you may actually cover all four. That’s entirely your decision. It’s your discretion how you design your teaching and learning program to actually best support your students.

So, in the top left-hand corner is the button which actually gives you the navigation panel to actually slip between each of those four themes. So, as you can see with this one, it’s highlighted – colour-coded, for the geographers in the place. But really easily navigate... This one’s ‘Recovering from bushfires’. So, that purple theme, wherever you see purple in a theme, that means that you’re recovering. It’s very representative of a journey that’s going to be a positive experience in terms of recovery. So, in this section here, it gives you what I would call an overall introductory blurb into what that actual theme encompasses in terms of this part of the Secondary program. In the top right-hand corner, gives you the curriculum areas specific to those particular aspects in the theme. So, in this case, it’s Civics and Citizenship, Critical and Creative Thinking, and English. In the bottom right-hand corner is an actual ‘please note’, which occurs on every page of the theme pages, just to remind you the nature of the topic in the curriculum and how important it is for you to take those sort of considerations into mind when you’re designing and delivering your curriculum. Then down here in the bottom centre part, if you read here, there’s a title here – ‘The Blacksmith’s Tree – remembering Black Saturday’. And so that’s, obviously, a curriculum resource that’s been used as an example of the way which communities can recover from bushfires. So, again, it gives you an overall view of the learning intention and also gives you a link to download that specific area.

So, moving on to the next slide. This goes to where you go to the next section of it, so this is where it looks at the lesson overview. So, the view is ‘Types of fires’, good and bad fires. This one’s a curriculum level for a primary of Levels 1 and 2, and it’s about learning about bushfires, so colour-coordinated green there. This particular curriculum area is English, Level 2 – Reading and Viewing, and it goes through and gives you particular links there. It also outlines Health and PE links and so forth. So, again, you can click on the hyperlinks and go to the content descriptions here, and this is the one that I’ve actually chosen to do down here.

So, if I move to the next slide, this is the content description for this one, which is Health and PE Levels 1 and 2 – Personal, Social and Community Health, healthy while being safe and active. So, here it gives you the content descriptor on the left-hand side, content elaborations here, and also any other links in terms for curriculum resources and support. And I’ll give a free plug here for that Fuse platform that’s there as well. So, that, again, goes from the general sort of things, packing it right down to what sort of resources you can use at that level.

So, with that, at the very sort of minute level, this gives you some ideas and some guidance about what you could do as a lesson plan, so it’s a beginning point. So, let’s say you hold a class discussion to explore students’ prior knowledge – so, this is where you may do this in the same lesson where you’re doing these other teaching and learning activities, or you may like...given that the nature of the topic and the complexity of the topic, you might like to actually hold that discussion to actually explore students’ prior knowledge and their background early on, before you actually bed it down in your planning and delivery. So, this may not necessarily be part of the lesson plan, so these are just ideas. Some people will choose to snatch and grab them and go with them. Other people may be more discerning and take into other considerations. Again, it’s entirely your choice how you actually design the use of these sorts of things.

So, this gives you much more minute detail about what you might have for key discussion points, and then it has a suggestion as to why you might wrap up that one particular lesson, which is key for...sorry, recording some of the key areas discussed on your interactive whiteboard or on old-school poster paper or whatever to return in subsequent lessons. So, that gives you very much a lesson plan unpack-type arrangement.

So, on that note, I’m going to end my curriculum focus and I’m going to hand out...sorry, hand over to our really important visitors today, and they’re going to outline what particular resources they’ve developed there. So, over to you, Mark and Marthese.

**Mark Crowe:** Good afternoon, everyone. Yes, Mark’s my name, as introduced. First thing I want to do is go through what’s changed as far as the Fire Services go in Victoria since July 1 this year. Now, many of you are probably aware that there’s been a change.

Prior to July 1, of course, in Melbourne, the main Melbourne area, it was the Metropolitan Fire Brigade was the fire service for that area. 47 fire stations and all career firefighters. But there was also, of course, the CFA was spread across the rest of the...the state of Victoria. So, there’s 1,200 fire stations across Melbourne and regional and rural Victoria that were, and are still, the CFA, and, in fact, a lot of people didn’t realise that some of these CFA stations had career AND volunteer firefighters. They were known as integrated stations, these 38 stations, and these stations were on the outer suburbs of Melbourne and in some...the bigger regional areas of Victoria. So, we had a situation in Victoria where there was career firefighters in MFB and career firefighters in the CFA.

Since July 1, when Fire Rescue Victoria was formed, all career firefighters across what was MFB and the old integrated stations of CFA became Fire Rescue Victoria firefighters. So now we’ve got 85 fire stations across a greater area of Melbourne and in large regional towns where they’re all career firefighters and all come under Fire Rescue Victoria. And... But, of course, the CFA still very much exists – nearly 1,200 fire stations still in the outer suburbs of Melbourne and regional and rural Victoria. But all CFA firefighters are now volunteer... only volunteer firefighters. So, what we’ve got, a situation there, is that there are 38 now co-located fire stations, which are Fire Rescue Victoria career firefighters and volunteer firefighters.

Now, I don’t want to go into too... The context of that is now, as far as your school concerns...is concerned, that the program, some...many of the programs that used to be MFB programs are now expanding into the FRV greater area. So, I’ll show you what I mean and where that goes now. So, this is the greater area in Melbourne that we’re in now, so if you...maybe some of you used to be in areas out in the outskirts, such as Sunbury, Eltham, Boronia...

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Dandenong.

**Mark Crowe:** ...Dandenong, Springvale, etc, etc, are now under FRV. So, I’ll go into detail what that means about what we offer you, but it’s important to realise that where you are and what your fire service will offer you, your...well, your fire safety programs.

So, as far as the rest of Victoria goes, beyond Melbourne, Fire Rescue Victoria is in those areas you can see there. Now, I’ve made a list of the different outer suburbs and the different areas now, regional areas that are now FRV, for those who are interested. And as I say, they are all co-located stations that would still have the CFA volunteers there. So, I’ll just let that lurk there for a while – see if you can locate where you are and where you’re not.

There will be a changeover...well, sort of a changeover period, I suppose. We need to approach every area, especially the areas beyond the greater Melbourne area, to roll out our programs there. We’ve had a situation where some areas have had volunteers involved with community education somewhere. There’s been non-firefighters have been doing community education somewhere. The career firefighters, ex-CFA career firefighters, have been doing community education. But...yeah, so, we’re looking more for the Fire Rescue Victoria career firefighters delivering now.

So, we’ll move on to what we offer. So, if you come into these areas...if you live...or a school, rather, is in these areas now... Right, got the right one. Marthese.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** OK, we’ve got three fire safety education programs for primary schools – Fire Ed for Foundation, Upper Primary and Fire Ed for Special Ed.

So, Foundation concepts are basically home fire safety, residential fire safety. There’s at-home activities and fire safety information for families. Now, all programs will be expanding to all areas of FRV, and teachers and firefighters are in partnership with these programs, so they support each other in delivery of the program. There will be digital resources that are still undergoing development, and the plan is to have them online on the FRV website at the beginning of the next school year.

The Upper Primary program, there’s a move from the chalk and talk process, which we had previously, which was not a very successful way for upper primary students to learn, to a more student-centred, student research project approach, where students will be presenting their findings to their local firefighters and discussing this with them. The concepts for Upper Primary’s expanded from residential or home fire safety to include more summer fire safety at an urban interface.

There is also Fire Ed for Special Ed. We’ve got a significant... While a significant number of students receiving funding under students with disabilities attend their local primary school, there’s still a significant number who attend their local special school. So, this program is more or less catered... It’s kind of different from school to school, depending on the needs of the students and what teachers require. It does always include accessible resources for the students. It can have one or two firefighter visits, and there is safety information for families as well.

**Mark Crowe:** And all of the activities and all of the fire programs are mapped to the Victorian curriculum, as you’d probably expect. And we’ve... There’s a broad range of activities. Many of them, though, are based...literature or English-based, mapped to that curriculum, but there’s also several that are science – Science of Fire, for example. I won’t go into too much detail. Geography. So, you can pick up activities, especially in the Upper Primary...

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Yeah.

**Mark Crowe:** ...category, that relate to many of the...yeah, many curriculum areas. But the big focus, as Marthese said, is the big turnaround in the Upper Primary, which is not the firefighters coming in and just giving a chalk and talk, which can go well or not so well, depending on skills. Now they’ll be coming in after the teachers have actually prepared the students for a presentation through their projects. A couple of other... Is that right?

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Yep.

**Mark Crowe:** Yep. A couple of other of our programs, – so, they’re especially for the secondary teachers out there – the FLAMES...what we call our FLAMES program is aimed at secondary English-language schools and centres, and once again, there’s classroom resources, involves a firefighter presentation, but more of a focus on the new arrivals, new migrants, new refugees to the state, who are in these English-language schools and smaller centres within normal secondary schools, if you like. So... And we offer, yeah, information in 22 languages. There’s all sorts of...there’s a different focus in how we approach it, and the firefighters are trained differently especially, and not every firefighter does this, but we can offer that to secondary English-language schools.

Another program we have, which we thought we’d cover quickly, is our Firelighting Consequence and Awareness program. This is aimed at young people who partake in fire-risk behaviour. So, if they’re you know, in the habit of playing with matches or they have actually lit fire or caused damage, etc, etc, they can be referred to us. Often, these kids are referred to us through a court order.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Or through schools or family.

**Mark Crowe:** Certainly through the schools. And where you have a program where firefighters are involved with working those children to reduce...control their behaviour – a bit of counselling involved, that sort of thing. So be aware of that program. All the information for that’s online, and you can see I’ve got the links to the email there too.

And the last one is a bit of a divergence from fire safety, is we have a Road Safety program too. For those who are unaware, FRV firefighters, as are CFA firefighters and SES, are responsible for road accident rescue within Victoria. So, under that banner, I guess we are also involved in proactive education, reducing accidents and death on the road for a Year 11 half-day workshop, where we are only one stakeholder, but that involves a firefighter visit, a police visit, peer facilitators delivering a young passenger- and driver-focused road safety package there. It’s a half-day program, a workshop.

So, that’s a quick overview of our programs we offer for children.

**Craig Smith:** I’ve got a quick question before we pass over to Erin. Marthese and Mark, if schools were interested in accessing any of these programs, how would they go about doing so?

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Well, on the website, there will be a link to the Fire Ed mailbox for FRV, and they can just drop us a line and we will respond to that.

**Mark Crowe:** What they will find, though, the fire station...each fire station has an obligation to contact each school in their area as well to initiate the firefighter visits and the firefighter program. So, you should hear...if you’re in an FRV area primary school, you should hear from the fire station anyway. But you can go through, as Marthese said, through logging in a booking form or sending in an email, and the program can be initiated that way. But integral to all the programs is the firefighter visit, plus classroom activities. So, it may come from the firefighters, It may come from...initiated by the teacher on any given year.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** The teachers can contact us whichever way suits them best.

**Craig Smith:** Great. Thanks very much.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Thanks, Craig. Now I think we pass to Erin.

**Mark Crowe:** Erin.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** Thank you, Erin. I’ll just... Oh, dear. Now I can...

**Erin Wilson:** Yep.

**Marthese Kavanagh:** There.

**Erin Wilson:** Thank you. Alright, so, as well as the fantastic resources that are available through Fire Rescue Victoria and the lesson plans and other that Leonie’s already explained in relation to the four themes that are on the Bushfire Education website, there’s also a resources section on the website. And one of the things I think is really useful about this resources section is that you can sort according to topics. And so, these are additional resources to support your implementation in the classroom, on top of the resources already provided by the lesson plans.

And the other aspect is also a link to external resources. So, you’ll see a link to other Victorian government agencies. There’s resources that are provided through federal, Commonwealth and other agencies, as well as the other interstate state and territory agencies. So, if you’re really thinking about your communities, and you may be perhaps a border community, or you may be located in other aspects where you’re wanting to think about comparing different bushfire experiences, then those other external resources can also be really useful as well.

Moving on, and Craig has already sort of alluded to the fact that we’re developing this as part of a suite of resources, and working with other fire agencies as well. The next step, really, is, if you would like to hear more from us, particularly Leonie and myself, next week, we’re going to be focusing specifically on how you could use a bushfire education program to really consider and integrate it into the geography and science curriculum. So, we’re going to be looking at the different themes, and where you may position that relating to science and geography from F to 8. And that’s next Tuesday, 10 November, at the same time. And you can register for this program via the VCAA F-10 website, or the link is there as well. And moving forward into 2021, as you’re perhaps considering...

Oh, there we go. Alicia’s just also put it in the chat. Thank you, Alicia.

We’re also going to be, in 2021, providing more resources and support and webinars relating to other curriculum areas too. So, I would really encourage you, if you are not yet a subscriber to the VCAA bulletin, to subscribe to the VCAA bulletin, because that’s where a lot of the programs that we provide across F-10, but also VCE as well, are advertised in the bulletin. And then the F-10 Subscriber Update is also another great communication to subscribe to, because it will provide you with links to specific webinars and that kind of thing as well. So, I’m not sure if Alicia’s got those links to subscribe to those. Otherwise, they are available on the F-10 website too.

And I’m going to pass to you, Craig.

**Craig Smith:** Thank you, Erin. As we speak, Erin is...sorry, Alicia is popping up live links to the F-10 Subscriber Update. And, of course, you can always go on the VCAA F-10 resource pages under Professional Learning to acquaint yourself with our Professional Learning program. We put our updates there. We also...there are links there to go to past sessions, like the one today, which will be recorded, transcribed and posted up on there, including today’s PowerPoint.

The time we have now is really thrown open to you as participants, whether you have any questions, any comments or any aspects that have been presented today that you would like clarity or further information on. So, as I mentioned earlier, in the chat box, feel free to pop in your question, your query, or even your comment, under the Q&A section. And I’ll give you a minute or two – so I’ll go silent – for you to gather your thoughts, pop your questions in, and we’ll just wait. Happy to respond to them.

OK, that was a very quick minute. Strange factoid – in most languages, people are uncomfortable with silence in a group situation. For native English speakers, it’s around four seconds. So, if that felt incredibly long, I just want you to know you went five times the limit of the average English speaker before they start feeling uncomfortable.

In all seriousness, we’ll wind up today’s session. If you do have further questions or queries, our contact details are here. Leonie, Erin and myself, our emails are there, and of course, our colleagues at Fire Rescue Victoria.

I just want to thank everyone for...first for our panellists and especially our special guests from FRV. It’s our first sort of joint webinar presentation, and we’re keen to do some more next year. I’d also like to thank my colleagues from the VCAA, to Leonie and to Erin, and also for Alicia in the background, who, as I said earlier, organises and gets these webinars to happen. And finally, of course, I’d like to thank all of you for your attendance and look forward to you coming to our next session. If you make Tuesday, that would be fantastic. And, as I said, we will be running more sessions in term 1 in 2021. For this afternoon, thank you very much, and goodbye.

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