



Simon Corbell MLA

ATTORNEY GENERAL
MINISTER FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
MINISTER FOR TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

MEDIA RELEASE

MITCHELL FIRE UPDATE

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Environment and Sustainable Development, Simon Corbell has this morning reassured Canberrans that response and recovery operations to the fire at the Mitchell plant Friday night are moving as quickly as possible to ensure the safety of the surrounding areas before exclusions are lifted.

“The response by Emergency Services has been outstanding under difficult circumstances in dealing with this type of blaze. We are pleased this morning that overnight we have been successful in extinguishing the fire.

“We are taking a precautionary approach as we begin the recovery phase of the operations, and Mitchell remains within the exclusion zone.

“The Fire Brigade are focused on wrapping up the fire response which has been a successful operation. While the Fire Brigade are returning to normal operations today, ongoing monitoring of the site will be ongoing for the next 48 - 72 hours.

“Senior ACT Government Officials met this morning to identify the next steps in the recovery phase, and our focus this morning has shifted to investigations by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who are assessing and identifying environmental impacts,” Mr Corbell said.

Testing of the exclusion zone has commenced, with samples of ash being collected and tested by a forensic lab in Lidcombe, NSW with results to be known by the end of the weekend.

Investigations are focused on completion of a full visual inspection by EPA officers, and testing of ash within the exclusion zone. EPA is assessing residual smoke plumes and working closely with NSW Government officials. Results of this testing will be made publicly available via the ESA website www.esa.act.gov.au

“Business owners who have enquiries regarding their premises should contact Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 for further information.

“I know that many businesses are very anxious to get back to their businesses. We do ask for patience from those affected. Police will continue to patrol the area to ensure that premises remain secure.

“I have taken feedback from the community on the early warning system and will take that into consideration when the Government reviews the response and recovery to the fire. Analysis of the data will be released to the public.

“Those people who needed to be evacuated on Friday night were done so directly, and anyone in immediate danger where notified by ACT Policing.

“A central communications centre was established by 4am on Friday 16 September and has continued. We have had over 50,000 hits to the ESA website, and Canberra Connect has received close to 5,000 calls since Friday

morning. The use of social media has also received positive feedback with the ESA Twitter account jumping from 14 followers to over 1500 in the space of 24 hours.

“We understand the concerns people may have about potential health issues, and the Public Information Centre will be issuing advice on the ESA website shortly,” Mr Corbell concluded.

All ACT Public schools will reopen on Monday 19 September. ACTION buses have resumed usual services. For road closure information and situation updates visit www.esa.act.gov.au or follow @ACT_ESA on Twitter.

Statement Ends: Saturday, 17 September 2011

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