

NEWS

'Looking to the Future'



PAGE 8

REAL ESTATE



PAGE 7

SPORT

Madden's bowls visit



\$1 million commitment



Steve Bracks in Beechworth this week during a two-day Labor Party conference at La Trobe University. PHOTO: Gaynor Matthew

to Beechworth with his cabinet

Beechworth and the...
 Today Mr Bracks addressed a general caucus discussion on the state election victory...
 Bracks also spoke for Party unity and members spoke for nine...
 about what each...
 doing this year.
 members also discussed...
 re going to approach...
 ad, the legislative re-

forms the party will introduce and how backbenchers approach parliament.
 There was also a cabinet meeting after which caucus received a briefing from bushfire agencies about the state's current bushfire situation, followed by a formal dinner in the evening.
 Yesterday, the topic was budget preparation and there was a brief on standing orders in the Upper and Lower House which are yet

to be confirmed by those chambers.
 State Minister for Tourism John Pandazopoulos and Candy Broad were due to visit Tallangatta to meet with the Towong Shire to hear what may be required in terms of a bushfire response.
 Treasurer John Brumby, Deputy Premier John Thwaites and the Minister for Agriculture Bob Cameron were going to Omeo to inspect the fire situation there.

By Gaynor Matthew

THE STATE Government will commit \$1 million to help the state recover from the bushfires, Premier Steve Bracks announced in Beechworth on Monday.

Mr Bracks, Deputy Premier John Thwaites, Treasurer John Brumby, Minister for Tourism John Pandazopoulos and the Minister for Local Government and Housing Candy Broad met with the region's community organisations, CFA and SES, business people and council officials at an informal luncheon held at La Trobe University.

Mr Bracks said the reason the Labor Party was in Beechworth was to assist and support in the recovery efforts now that the bushfires have gone through.

"We've also provided assistance to the Victorian Farmers' Federation to provide emergency feed to stock and that is why today I am announcing a new fund to be set up to assist with the other recovery programs the government is undertaking."

Mr Bracks said the new 2003 Bushfire Appeal Fund is a trust under the State Trustees that ensures the government can receive donations from organisations which want to contribute to the recovery in Victoria. "We'll also be kicking off this month a \$1 million contribution to the state which I'm announcing here today and

we expect many more donations.

"I want to stress again that the fires are not out. The fires are more extensive than they were on Ash Wednesday. These fires have been burning for many weeks and yet despite that we have had no loss of life and property has been saved in an unprecedented way.

"This will go down as probably the most heroic effort ever in fighting fires in the history of this country."

Mr Bracks commended the fire fighters' co-ordination and logistics and paid tribute to those currently fighting fires in Victoria and the wide range of people supporting them.

Chief fire officer for the CFA from Melbourne, Russell Rees, was a guest at the luncheon.

In response to Mr Bracks' announcement, he said, "In terms of our priorities for firefighting, our approach is all about community sustainability, not just about putting the fires out but how the community can get back going again.

"So it is very important that we understand all of what recovery means, and that is a very important part of emergency management and we should never forget that," said Mr Rees.

Mr Bracks also officially launched the new Beechworth Visitors' Guide 'What is it about Beechworth?' at the luncheon.