

Eastern States hit by bushfires

Thousands of volunteers and professional firefighters battled yesterday more than 150 bushfires which have devastated thousands of acres of land in the eastern States.

Apart from contending with high temperatures which have exhausted firemen and aided further outbreaks, police said some fires appeared to have been purposely lit.

In **Victoria**, the State worst affected, more than 100 fires raged in the worst outbreak for three years.

The temperatures reached 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in some parts of the State and, before a cool change arrived last night, the temperature in Melbourne was 38 degrees Celsius.

Tens of thousands of acres were blackened by more than 50 bushfires in **Tasmania** yesterday.

Fire officials were hop-

ing that cooler temperatures last night would give them the upper hand in trying to control a fire only three miles from a northern suburb of Hobart. Police said they

believe the fire was deliberately lit.

In **NSW**, a major bushfire covering 1,700 acres south of Jindabyne in the Kosciusko National Park, was still burning out of control last night.

Hotter today

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The maximum temperature in Canberra today is expected to be 38 degrees (100 degrees Fahrenheit).

Yesterday's maximum was 35 degrees (95 degrees Fahrenheit), the warmest day recorded for 23 months.

A record 61.9 million gallons of water was used in the ACT in the 24 hours to 8am yesterday.

Some residents of Duffy and Fisher Streets, Ainslie, reported that they were without water for about three hours from 6pm.

A spokesman for the Bureau of Meteorology said mild to warm weather was expected over the weekend, with temperatures likely to reach 27 degrees.

About 80 men were battling the blaze last night, and officials fear further outbreaks.

In central Queensland, more than 30,000 acres of valuable cattle country had been destroyed by fire.

The deputy fire control officer of the ACT Bushfire Council, Mr Roger Fenwick, said last night that there had been six small grass fires in the ACT yesterday.

Four had been at the Coppin's Crossing Road, near Stromlo Forest, and appeared to have been lit deliberately.

Mr Fenwick said the total fire ban, which would be in force in the ACT for the 24 hours from midnight last night, included a ban on the use of oxy and electrical welding in the open.

The Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve will be closed from today until the fire hazard eases.

A peaceful role for the services. — Page 2.