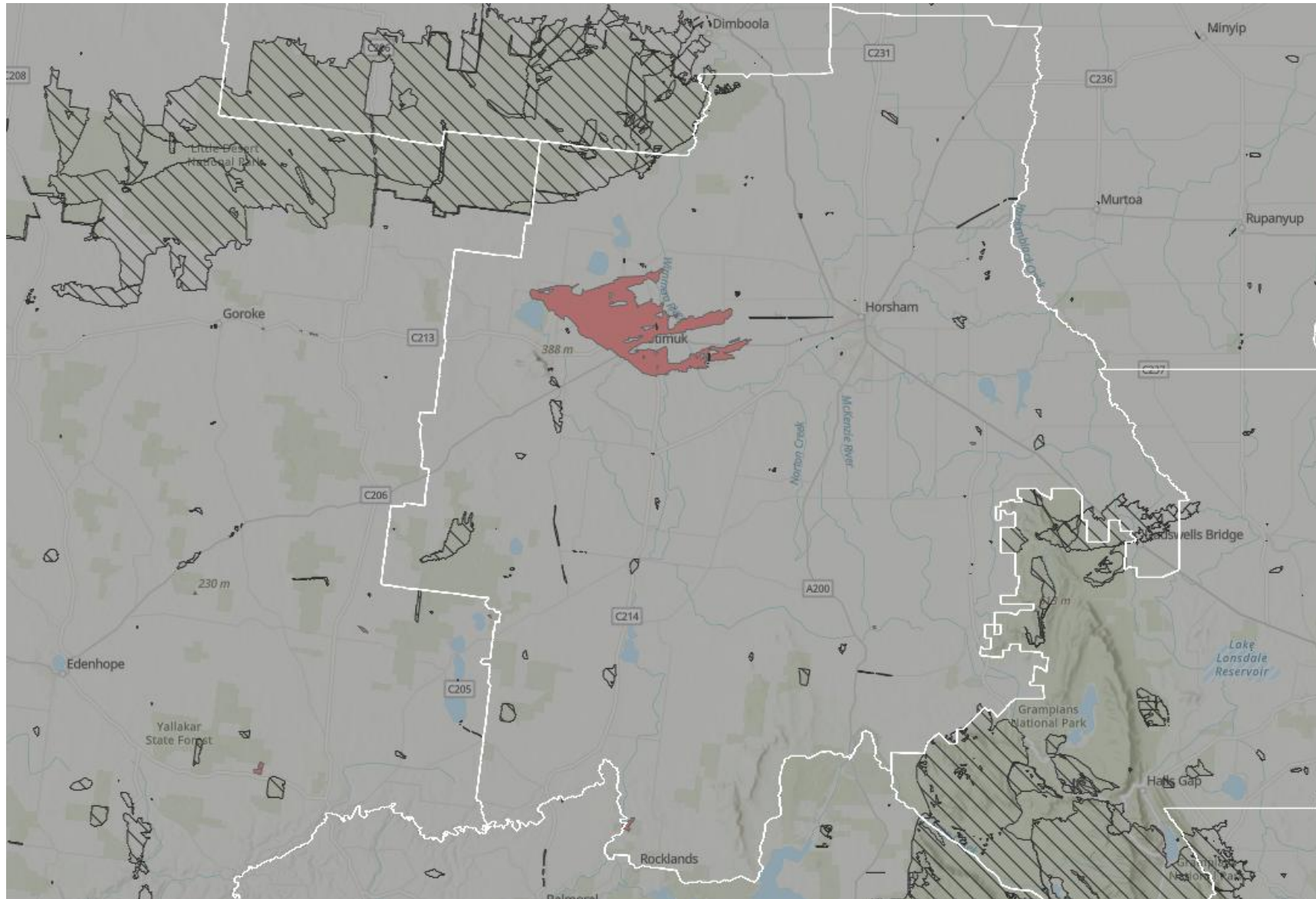


2026 Summer Fires Inquiry



History of Recent Fires

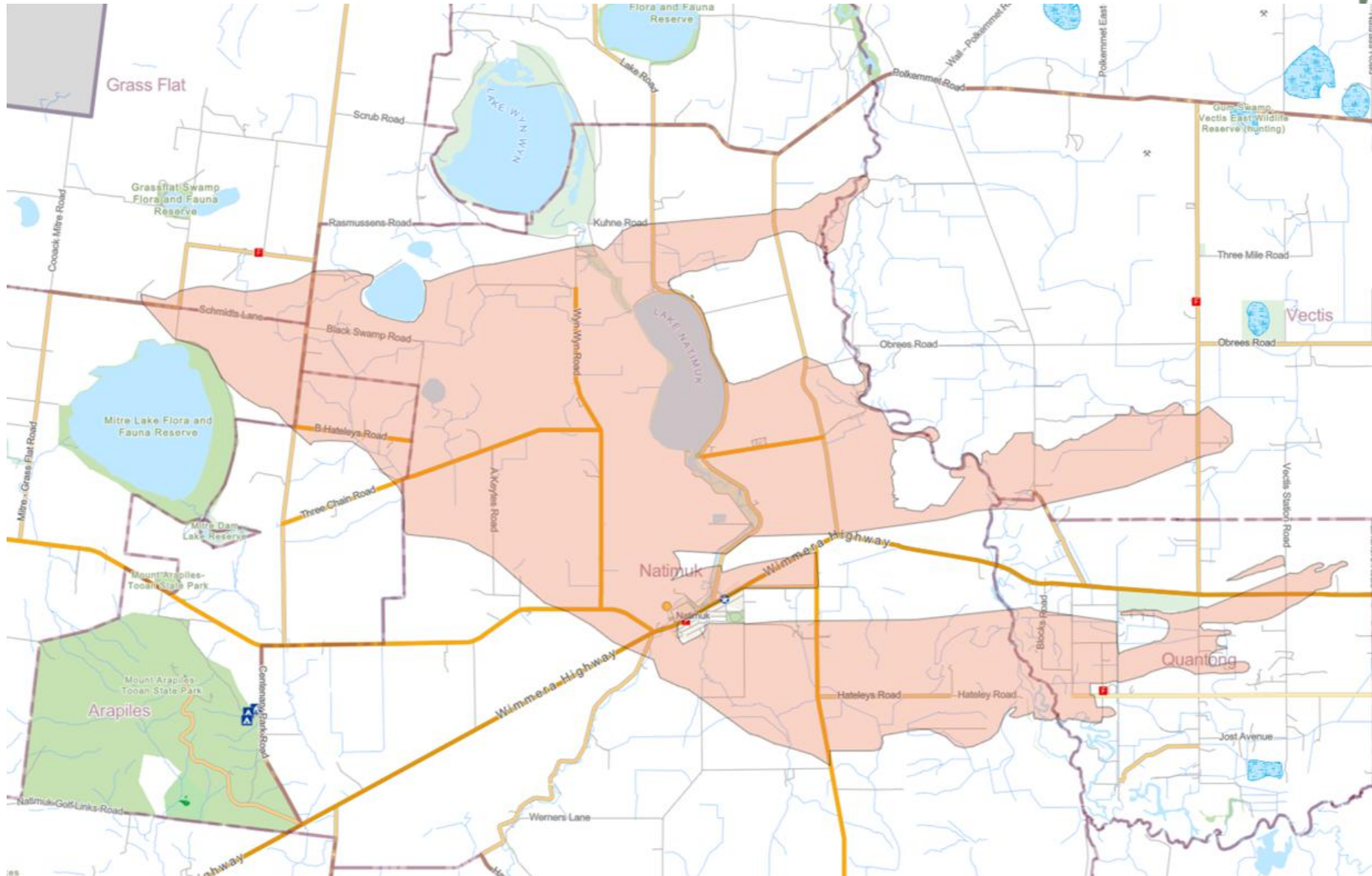
Red – 2026

- Grass Flat
- Rocklands, Smiths Rd

Black Dashed

- Grampians – Yarram Rd – 2024-25
- Little Desert 2025
- Mt Stapylton – Dadswells Bridge 2024

9 January 2026 – Grass Flat Fire



Key Impacts

- 19 houses totally destroyed.
- 6 houses recorded as damaged but still habitable.
- Bowling Club destroyed, Gymnasium significantly damaged
- 15 sheds impacted
- 440 cases recorded on Crisisworks
- 1,388 people registered through the system – 283 of those are children
- External fencing – 50 km, internal fencing 6 km recorded

Recovery Aspects

- Rehousing and re-establishment wellbeing support – DFFH, Rural Financial Counselling and Grampians Community Health facilitated
- Drinking water – DEECA program and GWMWater
- Insurance – Allied Justice providing support to people to navigate this space
- Fencing – BlazeAid operated from its base camp in Natimuk mid Jan – end March – 50km fencing cleared and reinstated
- Waste Management – Council opened a temporary site in Natimuk
- Road clearance – Assets inspection / data capture, vegetation, soil drift removal, minor assets repair

LG - Government Recovery Funding

- Council Support Funds - \$750,000
 - Will fund some things that are not funded by DRFA Emergency works program
- Community Recovery Officer Fund \$1.3 Million
 - Community Recovery staff
 - Set up and operating 2 Community Recovery Hubs one in Quantong and one in Natimuk
- DRFA Funding – claims based
- Key challenges:
 - Administrative arrangements are complex, including evidentiary requirements and eligibility criteria

Key Recommendations

TOR 1. The preparation and planning by government, emergency services agencies and the community ahead of the fire season, including management of public and private land and roadsides;

- Public land managers, e.g. of national parks, and other reserves including roadsides, need to ensure that their fuel reduction programs, including fire breaks, are effective, regularly maintained and adapt to seasonal conditions.
- Ability to enforce Fire Prevention Notices on public land and its managers.

TOR 4. The emergency responses to control and contain the fires, including adequacy of resources and communications;

- Non-government personnel involved in supporting core fire agencies, e.g. Local Government, need access to common communications systems used by Government agencies.
- Practical arrangements to management of road blocks need to be put in place to enable effective community engagement within fire ground areas, while still maintaining public safety.

Key Recommendations

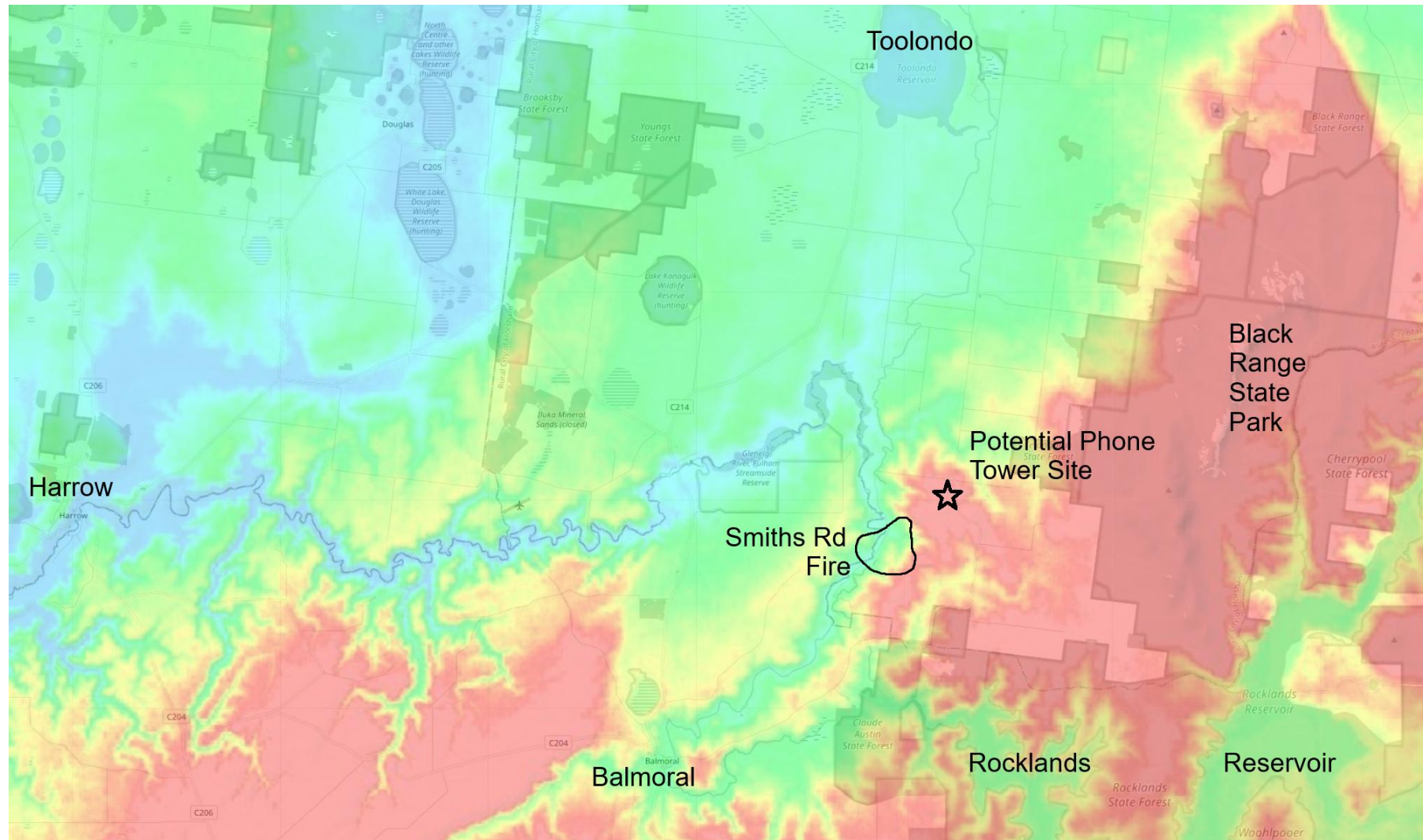
TOR 5. resilience of critical services and infrastructure such as electricity, water and telecommunications during and after the fires;

- The circumstances of the loss of mobile phone coverage in the Natimuk area need to be understood and addressed to avoid a repeat at this and other sites.
- The mobile telephone black spot area in the vicinity of the Rocklands Smiths Rd fire can be remedied with installation of a local tower.

TOR 6. The impact on the community, business and agriculture and efforts to aid in recovery;

- Systematic recovery funding arrangements are needed to improve the timeliness of delivery of Government support to communities in their recovery from fires.
- The administrative processes for managing recovery funding arrangements need to be streamlined, while still ensuring accountability of spending of public money.

Mobile Phone Tower - Telangatuk



- Diagram shows terrain. Red high, blue low.
- A tower on the hill would cover a key black spot area
- Would command much of the incised Glenelg River valley.

Acknowledgements

• **Response**

- CFA, Volunteers and Staff
- DEECA / FFM
- Community members – Private units, Speed Tillers

Relief / Recovery

- Services Australia
- Department of Families Fairness and Housing
- Grampians Community Health
- Allied Justice - Legal advice
- Red Cross
- Rural Financial Counselling Services
- Legal Aid
- Telstra
- Agriculture Victoria
- Insurance Council sent reps from Alliance and IAG Limited
- AAMI, Suncorp, RACV, GCU
- Mind Australia
- JPs
- Meli Financial Counselling
- Apologies to those left off inadvertently