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The Courier

Call for tower to open

Feb. 26, 2009, 1:56 p.m.

A NEWBURY resident has called for the Blue Mount fire tower to be reopened in the wake of this week's Daylesford bushfires. Former Metropolitan Fire Brigade fireman Andrew Barker said he was forced to stand at the foot of the tower for four hours on Monday to keep a fire watch. "The Daylesford fire started just six kilometres away from the Blue Mount fire tower," Mr Barker said. "All the burning embers were flying in. Thank God the wind changed and blew it in the other direction." Mr Barker said he used his CB radio to alert other residents to any burning embers. They then put them out using mobile water tanks on the back of their utes. Newbury is located 5km south of Trentham and 4km from the Blue Mount Tower. Mr Barker said the Blue Mount tower was closed this season due to high costs and the fact three other fire towers are in the area. However, he said the Mt Blackwood fire spotter's view was blocked by the Blue Mount tower while the Mt Franklin tower was 40km north-west of Newbury and the spotter couldn't see the area. On Monday, the view from the Mt Macedon tower was obscured by smoke haze and the sun. Mr Barker said he rang the Department of Sustainability and Environment on Wednesday to ask for the tower to be reopened, but was unable to get a satisfactory response. "As an ex-fireman, I've been trying to get the job on the tower myself but I don't care if it's not me just so long as someone's up there. "They'd (DSE) would rather have something go wrong and face it in an inquiry rather than answer the hard questions." DSE was yesterday unable to respond due to preparing for today's expected dangerous fire conditions.