

CONNECTIONS UNITINGCARE BUSHFIRE RESPONSE

WORKING TO SUPPORT AND ASSIST AT A TIME OF NEED

Connections UnitingCare has been shocked and saddened by the tragic events as a result of the Victorian bushfires. The enormous impact on such a broad range of people across so many localities is hard to comprehend. Our thoughts and prayers are with people affected.

With such devastation come stories of bravery and wonderful generosity. We commend the work done by emergency services and volunteers in particularly difficult circumstances. Members of the community are now coming together to provide love, support and practical assistance.

'This is one of those times when we all feel somewhat helpless but also want to do something,' says Chief Executive Officer, Angela Forbes. 'We extend our hand of support to those in need and offer our deepest sympathies for those that have lost loved ones, cherished items and their home.'

The Connections Emergency Recovery Team has been activated as part of the Connections response to the fire disaster. Our Team consists of counselling and family services team staff trained in offering trauma support, debriefing and counselling for existing clients affected by the fires. Connections has also linked into the SHARE Bushfire Disaster Appeal and we have been able to contribute non-perishable food items, clothing and other everyday items for those in need.

SHARE, the fundraising arm of UnitingCare, has joined with the many Victorian rural communities who have been devastated by bushfires in the last few days. People have lost homes and sustained significant property damage affecting long term livelihood, whilst others are mourning the death of loved ones. The Uniting Church networks include Ministers and Congregations within these rural communities who have already been working tirelessly this past week.

'Connections as part of the broader UnitingCare family has offered any practical assistance to our sister agencies in particularly hard-hit areas. We are also ensuring that people in areas still under immediate threat are aware of our ability to assist and be a conduit to other agencies for immediate support,' says Ms Forbes.

How Can You Help?

- Donate to the SHARE Bushfire Disaster Appeal by calling 1800 668 426 or donate online by going to www.shareappeal.org.au
- The SHARE Community Appeal is also coordinating a temporary accommodation register. If you have a room, a house, a holiday house or a caravan that you would like to offer to a fire affected family in Victoria, for a night, a week or a month, please contact Pip Sorel on 1800 668 426 or 03 9251 5484.

Media: Contact Connections Communications and Fundraising Manager, Matt Clear on 03 9271 0800 or 0403 229 094 or matt.clear@connections.org.au

Connections is a community welfare agency of the Uniting Church's UnitingCare network in Australia providing a range of innovative and early intervention programs that support vulnerable children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.