

4 March 2020



Bushfire Relief Appeal soars over \$3Million

The generosity of Jewish Victorians has resulted in over \$3Million being raised for the Victorian Jewish Bushfire Relief Appeal, as announced at the Jewish Community Council of Victoria Plenum on Monday night.

Ian Davis, representing the Organising Committee of the Appeal, outlined the benefit of a unified response, bringing many Jewish organisations together to maximise the reach of making a real difference in the lives of rural Victorians impacted by the devastating bushfires. Davis emphasized that no administrative fees were being deducted and all funds were in the process of being allocated to best assist tangible outcomes for devastated communities.

A priority has been to ensure the funds would directly assist members of the rural community in the recovery phase where an urgent need existed. Many meetings with senior members of leading aid organisations and personal visits with community groups has resulted in the Allocations Committee, chaired by Carol Schwartz AO, directing funds to Blazeaid Inc; Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund; Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal; Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife; and The Man from Snowy River Bush Festival to boost morale and business opportunities of families in Corryong .

A \$1million donation to the St Vincent's de Paul "Back to School" program to directly help students from bushfire affected regions receive new school materials, computers, clothing and counselling support to assist with the physical and emotional challenges to commence the new school year has been a major recipient of the funds. A visit to the Sacred Heart School in Corryong was inspirational for both the Organising Committee and the school community.

Principal of Sacred Heart School Corryong, Zoe Nugent wrote to the Organising Committee, "Thank you for coming to our beautiful little town and stopping to visit us. Your donations and your absolute wish to be of service has been humbling and treasured."

The Victorian Jewish Bushfire Relief Appeal has enabled students to attend school camps and encourages a positive school experience, according to Andrew McKenzie, General Manager Marketing and Fundraising St Vincent de Paul's who also presented at the Plenum. He emphasized that St Vincent's focus is helping to alleviate and move people out of disadvantaged circumstances, and this clearly resonated with the Organising Committee, David Smorgon OAM, Ruth Alter, Fiona Geminder and Ian Davis.

McKenzie's firsthand feedback after visiting Bairnsdale and towns in the East Gippsland area, informed the large audience including many Jewish communal leaders, that real lives were being enriched and supported by the efforts of the Melbourne Jewish community and this was acknowledged and appreciated by the recipients.

The Jewish values of Tzedakah and Tikum Olam were clearly underlying the generosity and delivery of assistance to those in need. Jennifer Huppert, President and Judy Fetter, Executive Director JCCV were working closely with members of the Appeal Operational Committee to ensure a seamless process for local and international donors to the campaign, noting it will close on 15th March.

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