

Ethnic Communities Australian Bush Fire Appeal Launched

Western Australians especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, concerned about the devastating impact of the bush fires in WA and across Australia now have the opportunity to channel their donations through the Multicultural Services Centre of WA (MSC), a reputable and long established charitable organisation.

According to Moody's economist (Moody's Analytics) Katrina Ell, the economic damage from the bushfires devastating Australia's eastern seaboard is likely to exceed the record \$4.4bn set by 2009's Black Saturday blazes.

"The 2009 fires, which ripped through relatively densely populated rural areas north of Melbourne, killed 173 people and almost completely destroyed the town of Marysville."

"MSC has the licence to collect money and goods, under the Charitable Collections Act 1946 for such purposes. Having launched appeals in the wake of the devastating impact of the floods in Kerala and the Tsunami/earthquake in Sulawesi, in partnership with a number of community organisations, we felt it was important to do likewise to address the unprecedented devastation of the bush fires across Australia", said Ramdas Sankaran, MSC's CEO.

"Given the scale of the devastation, it is inspiring to see people around the world moved to action to assist those in need and I am particularly proud to see the support coming from fellow Western Australians", said Hon. Paul Papalia, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests. "I applaud all those involved in fund raising and wish you every success in your efforts", he added.

"Thankfully, the human death toll of the fires this season is much less (reportedly about 25) than the 2009 fires but the native fauna death toll and damage to plantations, properties, businesses etc. are significantly worse. The destruction in towns such as Cobargo and Mogo on the NSW south coast, Mallacoota in far south-east Victoria, a significant portion of Kangaroo Island off the coast of S. Australia; and closer to home at the SA/WA border and in Yancheop are such that it will take years for them to recover", said Suresh Rajan, President of the Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA).

Hon. Nick Catania, the Chairman of The Bendigo Bank, North Perth, said he "was delighted MSC is using its account with the Bank for this purpose. Our bank has its own Flood Appeal and also makes significant investments by way of corporate social responsibility for other issues". We will promote this appeal as best we can, he added."

"For electronic banking those transferring money can do so using the following details. **Account Name** - MSC (Natural Disasters), **BSB-633000**, **Account Number-160 645 594**, Ref: Bushfire Appeal". Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible and receipts will be issued", said Mr. Sankaran.

"MSC has assured ECCWA that it will not use donated monies for administration, accounting, and audit or for any other purpose and it will bear those costs. Given its reputation, and what it did in the case of the Kerala and Sulawesi appeals, I am confident that **every cent donated will be sent to reputable organisations addressing needs of the bush fires victims**," said Mr. Rajan.

Citizenship and Multicultural Interests Minister Paul Papalia said "Appeals such as this provide our culturally and linguistically diverse communities the opportunity to be part of the wider Australian community in addressing the social and economic devastation that are being experienced by their fellow Australians. "I therefore urge Western Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds, especially, professionals and business people to contribute as much as they can to the Appeals".

The Minister's call was backed by Mr. Sankaran who cited the example of Mr Raj Gupta whose own house was destroyed by bush fires but has refused to take payments from his patients stating "There's been no power, there's been no communication [so] we can't take payments, but that's not much of a concern ... People will come back and pay. They are very honourable people. <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/amid-the-ruins-of-the-nsw-bushfires-this-pharmacist-is-keeping-his-doors-open>

For media enquiries please contact Ramdas on 0418275786 or Suresh on 0403276960.

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