



*This is an ASU news item retrieved from archives
- please note that links may no longer work*

General

Ongoing support for ASU members affected by the Victorian bush fires

13 February 2009

When the ASU published its condolence message earlier this week we did not expect the horrific fires to still be burning by the end of the week. The sheer magnitude of the disaster has urged a corresponding response to provide support to all those affected. The ASU along with many other organisations will continue to provide that support whilst grieving the losses in the ASU family.

[ASU condolence message](#) from earlier this week.

ASU family affected

As messages have filtered through, we have learned of deaths and property loss in the ASU family.

ASU Victorian organiser Barry Miller's car is now one of the most recognised in Australia as a photo of the burnt out wreck in a pile up with three others has been one of the many "chilling" images of the Victorian bush fire disaster. Thankfully, he survived.

Barry was today discharged from hospital where he was being treated for injuries sustained in the crash and from smoke inhalation. He counts himself lucky. He lost his house, as did his son, but all of their family were spared. He has been a Kinglake local for 46 years.

Barry's message to all his well wishers is that he is okay and that he appreciates all your calls of support. And he apologises for not being able to respond to all the messages - I'm sure everyone will forgive you for that, Barry, just take care.

Other members lost houses and we have some confirmed deaths as well. We send our sincerest condolences to their families.

Support for members on the frontline

The ASU has pledged \$50,000 to the bush fire appeal and is supporting members in the affected areas.

The ASU's local government, social and community services and utilities members are particularly involved in the relief effort. Councils in the fire zones have set up relief centres and adjoining councils are assisting their efforts. Many community services and utilities workers are coming in to provide people with urgent care as well as beginning the task of rebuilding, with reconnection of electricity, water, etc.

As active members of their communities, many ASU members are CFA and SES volunteers, as well as volunteers in many other support organisations. The ASU has always defended members who undertake such voluntary activities - recent events have shown once and for all how critical they are in these disastrous circumstances.

Appeal to employers of ASU members

The ASU is asking employers in our industries in the affected areas to show compassion and flexibility for any affected workers. This includes allowing volunteer fire fighters to continue in their amazing work and allowing bush fire victims to return to work when they have had time to put their lives in some order once more.

For workers who are directly involved in the relief effort, the ASU is also urging employers to ensure that counselling services are put in place.

ASU members setting up collections in the workplace are encouraged to urge their employers to match worker contributions.

International solidarity messages

The ASU has received messages of support from our international affiliates including the Public Services International (PSI) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). The ASU thanks all our affiliates for their support in this great show of International solidarity.

The PSI Asia/Pacific Regional Secretary has advised that the PSI is going to tip in 10,000 Euro to the bush fire appeal (nearly \$20,000 AUD) which is very generous and much appreciated.

Links to resources and assistance

To donate, we encourage going through the [Red Cross Bush Fire Appeal](#) portal.

You can download a Victorian Council of Social Services produced list of support services below, which includes information on grief and counselling services.

The ACTU is summarising union messages on their special page [ACTU Bush Fire Appeal](#) page.

You can express your gratitude to fire fighters at a special [Thank You Firies](#) page.

Related Documents:

[Download VCOSS resource links \(DOC\)](#)

Contact Details

Name : Paul Slape
Telephone : (03) 9342 1400
E-mail : pslape@asu.asn.au
WWW : <http://www.asunational-archive.asn.au/>