

FINAL REPORT ON JOINT GEELONG/HEALVILLE INTER-CHURCH¹ WORKING PARTY (8/9th AUGUST) TO BUSHFIRE AFFECTED AREAS

This is a final summary report on the three working parties which spent the following weekends up in the bushfire-affected areas around Yarra Glen – Healesville – Buxton - Marysville. The dates of these were:

- 27/28th June 2009
- 18/19th July
- 8/9th August

Genesis & Objectives of Project

This working party initiative is part of a two-staged initiative taken by the Barrabool Hills Baptist Community Church, working in conjunction with the Healesville St Johns Anglican Church, to provide some needed assistance to some of the families affected by the February 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires².

Barrabool Hills first established a link with the Healesville Anglican Church in May 2009, and it was agreed that together they could support affected families by two complementary initiatives:

- Providing practical outside clearing up support for bushfire-affected peoples properties, particularly for those living outside of the main townships affected (eg Marysville)
- To later offer a weeks holiday ('a Bit of a Break') to some affected families, originally planned for the September school holidays, but now put back until the 14th – 21st November.

The Healesville Anglican Church has a close relationship with the Healesville General Practitioners (GPs) Network, and the majority of the beneficiaries/clients were referred to the churches from this source.

Beneficiaries & tasks completed



Over each of the three weekends, a team of 15-17 volunteers came in from Geelong, and carried out a combination of the following tasks on fifteen properties in and around Yarra Glen, Steels Creek, Dixons Creek, Tollangi, Chum Creek, Healesville, Narbethong, Marysville & Buxton. Please see the enclosed map link for these locations.

<http://www.torquaid.com/images/stories/LatestBushfireMap.jpg>

¹ This is primarily an inter-church initiative between the Geelong Barrabool hills Baptist Community church, and the St Johns Healesville/Yarra Glen Anglican Church, with some logistical support also provided by Christian College, Geelong.

² This was Australia's worst natural disaster where 173 people were killed; over 2,200 homes (and a total of 3,500 buildings) were burnt down; the loss of homes for 7,500 people; and a damage bill estimated at around A\$ 1.5 billion.

Altogether a total of 95 person-days were spent by these volunteers in carrying out these tasks:

- Interacting with the clients/beneficiaries; hearing their stories; and developing some good relationships
- Carrying out a variety of outside tasks, these including the cutting up a variety of wood and brushwood, and in places either burning or stacking this; pulling up burned fence poles; and cutting down incinerated tree saplings
- Refurbishing temporary accommodation (a mobile school classroom) for a displaced couple

Volunteers

On each weekend there were between 16-18 volunteers. Altogether a total of 30 volunteers were involved in this initiative (a number of these people had multiple visits).

Future Work

It is planned that over the coming month the joint churches will plan to host between 18-24 affected couples or families to have a weeks' break down along the Surf Coast, at locations in Ocean Grove, Torquay and possibly Angelsea. The proposed dates for this are now the 14th – 21st November.



Contact Details

Please further details on this joint churches project, please contact Mr John Pelchen, the Barrabool Church Community Care Coordinator (on 0400 442526 or jpelchen@bigpond.net.au).

Chris Piper

Chris Piper
Barrabool hills Field Coordinator
30th September 2009