

Bush fires devastate Australia

Salvation Army teams provide vital help during disaster.

Salvation Army personnel in southeastern Australia assisted emergency service workers and others affected by the bushfires that have killed a record number of people in the State of Victoria. As the death toll approached 200 people, dozens of towns remained threatened as fires continued to burn out of control. The toll was expected to rise as emergency teams gained access to devastated areas.

Heavily involved in the emergency response, The Salvation Army provided emergency accommodation, clothing, toiletries and other goods, and supplied food and refreshments for firefighters and bushfire victims.

During the first weekend in February (7-8), 225 volunteers in 16 teams worked alongside emergency service crews and devastated communities, providing chaplaincy support to those assisting with the emergency and to families and individuals in shock from the enormity of the disaster.

The Salvation Army Overdale Rural Rehabilitation Centre in Kilmore was razed to the ground by one of the fires. Since established six years ago, this facility provided rehabilitation services to hundreds of Victorians. It was totally destroyed, along with vehicles, equipment and medications. Evacuated earlier, the residents were unharmed.

In the coming days, as the fires are brought under control and extinguished, The Salvation Army will move towards the recovery phase, working with the affected communities to help people rebuild their lives.

Donations may be made at www.salvationarmy.org.

*From a report by Colonel Raymond Finger,
Chief Secretary, Australia Southern Territory*

