

ACA Member Bulletin: Victorian Bushfires – request for information

Australian Camps Association – Industry Updates and News

Date: 16 February 2009

Outdoor Industry Taskforce Update

In the aftermath of Victoria's catastrophic bushfires, people throughout Victoria, Australia and indeed the world, have given and offered support of all kinds to those most closely affected by the fires. People working in the outdoor education, adventure, recreation and camping sector have been affected in various ways. Staff from some of the representative groups in the Outdoors community, the Victorian Outdoor Education Association (VOEA), the Outdoor Recreation Centre (ORC), Tourism Alliance Victoria (TAV) and the Australian Camps Association (ACA), met together with staff at the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development (Sport & Recreation Victoria) last week to form an Outdoor Industry Taskforce to assess the impact on our sector and collaborate on how best to provide support to those affected.

The ACA is also working closely with Christian Venues Association to facilitate a coordinated response to this crisis.

The Victoria Online website <http://www.vic.gov.au> and the Premier's website <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/> contain comprehensive links to ways of both accessing and offering support.

Beyond the mainstream support on offer, the outdoor industry representative bodies are offering a range of immediate support as needed to outdoor organisations whose operations have been directly impacted or are currently threatened by fire. This support may include:

- temporary office admin support
- volunteer staff to assist with clean-up or bushfire preparation
- temporary storage of equipment

If you'd like to tap into these or any other services needed, please contact your representative group ([VOEA](#), [ORC](#), [TAV](#), [ACA](#), [CVA](#)).

Based on reports to us last week from a number of organisations providing outdoor services, an indirect impact is emerging that we believe needs to be gauged as accurately and swiftly as possible. It seems that some camps and outdoor programs are being cancelled, not due to a booked facility being damaged, but because of client anxiety over the risk of being in the bush. We were fortunate to meet on Friday with the Minister for Sport, Recreation and Youth Affairs, James Merlino. The Minister is fully aware of the impact of the fires on the outdoor industry, and was most concerned about reports of cancellations and has asked us to provide some accurate, verifiable data on this trend. We hope to be able to gain some Government support to address this problem if it is indeed widespread. If your organisation has experienced any cancellations since the fires, please email us at <[David Petherick](#)> with data in the following format:

Month of Cancellation	\$ cost of cancellation	Employment impact of cancellation (staff hours lost)	# of participants	Reason for cancellation	Annual \$ turnover of your business	Estimated %age of your turnover spent in regional Victoria	# of employees (effective full time)
					* your data will remain confidential and only be expressed anonymously, in aggregate		

The data collected will form part of an Industry Impact Assessment. If you have any other verifiable information about impacts on your own or any other outdoor organisation or business that has resulted from these fires, please email us with the details at <[David Petherick](#)>. We must report to Government by the end of this week (20 February 2009). It is therefore essential that we receive your reports by no later than 5pm this Thursday February 19th.

In the medium term, there are already signs that these fires have triggered a shift in community opinion toward the belief that the incidence of extreme weather events is increasing. In order both to prudently manage the risk of extreme weather and to head off a potential decline of market confidence in the services we offer, we believe our community must as soon as possible review and, if necessary, reform the way we manage the risks posed by severe weather to outdoor programs. Dates for a forum to discuss these issues will be announced later this week.