

# AFP helps Victoria in the aftermath of the bushfires

The AFP deployed more than 200 members to assist Victoria Police in the aftermath of the Victorian bushfire disaster. AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty offered the AFP's full support to the disaster response following discussions with Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon.

"The AFP established close contact with our colleagues from Victoria Police and was able to assist by rapidly deploying response teams to Victoria," Commissioner Keelty said.

With AFP members drawn from a range of functional areas, the overall role of coordinating the AFP's response is managed by the Senior Investigating Officer and the AFP Operations Coordination Centre – Incident Coordination Centre (AOCC-ICC) based

in Canberra. Requests for assistance are received via the AFP's Police Forward Command Post in Melbourne, who are embedded within Victoria Police command to enable the AFP to respond to requests effectively.

The response and recovery effort has led to the AFP supporting Victoria Police with a range of vital tasks. This has included Disaster Victim Identification (DVI), searching for victims, supporting the National Registration Inquiry Service to

provide families and close friends with basic details on the whereabouts and safety of people affected by the fires, and general policing support duties including anti-looting patrols, crime scene cordons and road blocks.

The International Deployment Group - Operational Response Group deployed 60 members to primarily assist Victoria Police Search and Rescue in undertaking searches of properties, vehicles and targeted areas in the devastated township of Marysville.



AFP member at Kinglake.



The AFP's Melbourne Office deployed 23 investigators to assist Victoria Police in the bushfire arson investigation. Manager Melbourne Office Alan Scott and Victoria Police Detective Sergeant Chris Murray briefed the investigators before they departed to the scene of the bushfires.

"This is an ideal opportunity to work with our colleagues from Victoria Police on a very important investigation," Commander Scott said.

A contingent of 50 AFP members deployed on 19 February to assist Victoria Police with general policing duties, including traffic duties and crime scene cordons. On arrival they were sworn in as Special Constables in the Victoria Police force, which enables them to enforce Victorian state laws with full police powers. These members were drawn from across the AFP, including ACT Policing and Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane Offices.



Top left: Property at Kinglake.

Bottom left: AFP members being sworn in as Special Constables in Victoria Police.

Top right: IDG-ORG members at debriefing session.

Bottom right: Melted alloy from a burned truck.



National Manager International Deployment Group Frank Prendergast and Senior Investigating Officer, Commander Steve Lancaster spoke to the members prior to their deployment.

“Thank you all for putting your hand up. It’s good to see people willing to volunteer and deploy at short notice,” Assistant Commissioner Prendergast said.

Commander Lancaster recently travelled to Victoria at the invitation of Victoria Police to see the work the AFP is doing, and to see the devastation of areas such as Kinglake and other townships first hand.

“The feedback I received from Victoria Police and the other agencies involved, is a credit to everyone who has contributed to the AFP response,” Commander Lancaster said. “The AFP’s professionalism, ability to be flexible and deliver quality results has been extremely well received.”

The AFP’s Disaster Victim Identification team are well prepared for an event of this scale and nature, having learned a great deal while helping the Indonesian Police investigate the Bali bombings in 2002. The investigators routinely deal with hazards such as asbestos contamination in the search areas and unstable buildings and trees.

“We are able to mobilise quickly and with all our equipment, we are now in demand,” Acting Superintendent Rod Anderson said.

The disaster recovery operation could take many months to complete, due to the magnitude and severity of the fires. The AFP is committed to providing assistance to help the affected communities return to their normal lives as soon as possible.