



Baptist Union of Australia **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release

11 February 2008

Baptists launch Emergency Bushfire Relief Fund

Australian Baptists have been urged to give generously to a new Emergency Bushfire Relief Fund to assist those most affected by the Victorian bushfires.

“Victoria has experienced its worst natural disaster with more than 180 lives lost, 80 still missing, over 1000 homes destroyed, 1200 square miles burned out, and thousands left homeless since 7 February,” Baptist Union of Australia National Director Rev Dr Brian Winslade said.

“We have watched in horror this past weekend as news of the tragic bushfires in rural Victoria have taken their toll on lives and property. As a network of nearly 1,000 churches the Baptist Union of Australia is calling Baptist churches across our nation to prayerfully consider their response to this disaster.”

The Baptist Union of Australia has joined with the Baptist Union of Victoria and Baptcare to launch an Emergency Bushfire Relief Fund to provide funds to those most affected. The Fund received an initial grant of \$50,000 from Baptcare and will provide relief to families and individuals through:

- emergency aid for food, clothing and personal needs
- emergency accommodation
- transitional community services (e.g. child care)
- bereavement counselling

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Donations to the Fund will close on 15 March. Please give generously today to help ease the suffering of local communities devastated by the bushfires. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Donate online now at [Baptcare](http://www.baptcare.org.au), or make an offline donation by calling (03) 9831 7222.

Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Rev Dr Neville Callam expressed regret at the loss of life and property and commended the response of Australian Baptists to the disaster. He added that the BWA would launch an appeal in aid of the victims of the Victorian bushfires and contributions received would be forwarded to the Baptist Union of Victoria.

“Please be assured of the love and compassion of all Baptists who wish to comfort those who have experienced tragedy and loss. Please let our sisters and brothers in Australia know of our concern and prayers for them in these difficult days,” Dr Callam said.

Baptcare is a not-for-profit organisation providing care and support to the elderly, children, families, people with a disability and asylum seekers.

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