

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW SURVEY RESEARCH FINDS 97% OF CANBERRA CHARITIES HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY COVID-19 AS NEW APPEAL LAUNCHED TO SAVE OUR COMMUNITY SECTOR

HANDS ACROSS CANBERRA TODAY HAS LAUNCHED A CANBERRA RECOVERY APPEAL TO HELP LOCAL CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS GET ACCESS TO FUNDS, NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER.

THE APPEAL COMES OFF THE BACK OF A 3-MONTH SURVEY PROCESS WHERE FINDINGS HIGHLIGHT THE DIRE SITUATION FOR OUR COMMUNITY SECTOR.

DIANE KARGAS BRAY AM, CHAIR OF HANDS ACROSS CANBERRA, SAYS THAT FINDINGS SHOW THE BUSHFIRES AND COVID-19 HAS BEEN A DOUBLE HIT FOR CANBERRA'S COMMUNITY SECTOR, WITH MANY STRUGGLING TO STAY AFLOAT.

"THE SITUATION SADLY COULD NOT BE MORE SERIOUS," SAID KARGAS BRAY AM. "OUR LOCAL CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS WERE ALREADY UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE DUE TO THE DEVASTATING BUSHFIRE SEASON. THEY EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN THE NEED FOR THEIR SERVICES, HOWEVER, SERVICE DELIVERY WAS DISRUPTED DUE TO THE HIGH DENSITY OF SMOKE PREVENTING EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS FROM MOVING INTRA AND INTER-STATE.

"THEY HAD ONLY TAKEN THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS REBUILDING WHEN THE PANDEMIC REACHED AUSTRALIA, WHICH WAS A SECOND AND VERY LARGE HIT FOR THEM. THEY EXPERIENCED EVEN GREATER INCREASES IN THE VOLUME AND SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS DUE TO THE ECONOMIC AND EMOTIONAL FALLOUT FROM THE VIRUS. PLUS, THEY FACED NEW CHALLENGES SUCH AS THE INABILITY TO HOLD FUNDRAISING EVENTS, REGULAR DONATIONS CEASING AND HAVING TO FIND WAYS OF DELIVERING SERVICES WITHOUT ANY FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT.

"OUR RESEARCH SHOWS THAT 97% OF OUR COMMUNITY SECTOR HAS BEEN IMPACTED, WITH 83% STATING THAT THEY WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED. THIS IS A REAL THREAT, MANY OF OUR NOT-FOR-PROFITS COULD FOLD IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE."

PETER GORDON, CEO OF HANDS ACROSS CANBERRA, SAYS THAT IT WAS A NO BRAINER FOR HANDS ACROSS CANBERRA TO LAUNCH AN APPEAL TO HELP DUE TO THEIR UNIQUE POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO ASSIST OVER 250 LOCAL CHARITIES AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS.

"IN MARCH, AS WE WERE RECEIVING THE DATA FROM OUR RESEARCH, WE IMMEDIATELY SAW THAT SOMETHING NEEDED TO BE DONE AND QUICKLY," SAID GORDON. "SO, WE JOINED FORCES WITH THE SNOW FOUNDATION AND THE JOHN JAMES FOUNDATION TO CREATE A \$500,000 RAPID RESPONSE ROUND OF GRANT FUNDING FOR LOCAL NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS. THE TAKE UP WAS OVERWHELMING.

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE WHICH HAS PROMPTED US TO LAUNCH THE CANBERRA RECOVERY APPEAL IN HOPES THAT WE CAN GET OUR LOCAL CHARITIES AND ORGANISATIONS THE FUNDS THEY NEED TO GET THROUGH THIS CRISIS AND CONTINUE TO DELIVER THEIR MUCH NEEDED SERVICES TO OUR COMMUNITY AND COMPLEMENT THE ACT GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY SECTOR STIMULUS PACKAGE."

"OUR MESSAGE IS SIMPLE. IF YOU ARE IN A POSITION TO HELP AND DONATE, PLEASE DO. IT WILL MAKE SUCH A DIFFERENCE TO MANY CHARITIES WHO ARE STRUGGLING TO KEEP THEIR DOORS OPEN, LET ALONE OFFER SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO NEED IT.

"OUR APPEAL HAS BEEN WELCOMED BY THE COMMUNITY SECTOR, WITH OVER 35 ORGANISATIONS ALREADY SIGNING UP TO DRIVE THEIR OWN FUNDRAISING EFFORTS UNDER OF CANBERRA RECOVERY APPEAL BANNER. THE BUSINESS SECTOR IS ALSO DOING WHAT THEY CAN, WITH MANY DONATING MATCHED FUNDS. WHICH MEANS EVERY DOLLAR DONATED TO OUR APPEAL WILL BECOME \$2 FOR OUR CHARITIES.

"SO PLEASE, IF YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO HELP BUT HAVE BEEN UNSURE OF HOW, THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT US. YOU CAN DONATE TO ONE OR ALL LOCAL CHARITIES THROUGH OUR WEBSITE."

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