

6 January 2020

Dear ASI colleagues,

Thank you for your messages of concern and for reaching out to see what you can do during this desperate time for our country.

Australia's 2019/2020 fire season ignited much earlier than ever before, with bushfires ravaging some parts of the country from as early as July 2019 (our winter).

Now in early summer, much of southern Australia is currently under a state of Emergency and state of Disaster with 20 people confirmed dead, many missing and 1400 homes destroyed. At the time of writing there are 140 fires burning in NSW, 50 in Victoria, 20 in South Australia and 30 each in Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia.

To date, 12 million hectares have been burnt, fifty percent of our koala population has been destroyed and an estimated 500+ million animals have perished. In New South Wales alone, 3.6 million hectares have been burnt (larger than the land mass of Belgium), with 1 million in Victoria and 1.5 million in Western Australia.

Over the past week, many regions have been categorised as 'Evacuate Now'. Thousands of residents and holiday makers are packing belongings and leaving affected areas en masse, either through their own means or with assistance from the Australian defence force which has provided transport – ships, helicopters and aircraft – to evacuate people from areas isolated by fire.

Never in Australia's history has there been an evacuation of this scale.

On 20 December, many international media outlets reported news that the Adelaide Hills wine region suffered enormously from a raging fire, with major losses of vineyards, equipment, businesses and homes.

To aid our local wine industry, Sommeliers Australia is liaising across various fundraising events to support some of the charities listed below.

Any ASI members wanting to make a donation to the main charities supporting relief efforts, including the Adelaide Hills Fire Appeal, can do so directly via the relevant websites.

From a practical perspective, Sommeliers Australia encourages sommeliers around Australia and the world to support affected wineries (Adelaide Hills producers in particular, however other regions in Victoria and New South Wales continue to be under threat) by listing an extra wine by the glass or bottle, or by running a feature page for a set period of time. The producers and growers with major losses will suffer big impacts to their business over the coming years not just months.

Everyone involved with Sommeliers Australia is hoping that this major emergency situation will pass soon, and that our contributions will help with the rebuilding phase.

Thank you again for your care and kind words - any support would be greatly appreciated by those in need.

Kind regards,

Sarah Andrew & Chris Crawford

Sommeliers Australia – Co Presidents

Donations can be made to:

Red Cross <https://www.redcross.org.au/campaigns/disaster-relief-and-recovery-donate>

St Vincent de Paul Society https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/Donate/Vinnies_Current_Appeals/

Salvation Army <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/>

Firefighters

CFA (Victoria) <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about/supporting-cfa#donate-cfa>

RSA (New South Wales) <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/support-your-local-brigade>

Foodbank <https://www.foodbank.org.au/support-us/make-a-donation/donate-funds/?state=vic>

World Wildlife Fund <https://www.wwf.org.au/get-involved/bushfire-emergency#gs.ppas4t>

GIVIT <http://www.givit.org.au/>

Adelaide Hills Fire Appeal <https://www.adelaidehillswine.com.au/fireappeal>