

Launch of VECCI Business Relief Fund to assist businesses impacted by Black Saturday bushfires

VECCI today launched in conjunction with the State Government the VECCI Business Relief Fund (VBRF) to assist businesses indirectly impacted by natural disasters such as the Black Saturday bushfires by providing short-term financial support.

"Communities will not recover without a viable local economy," says VECCI CEO, Mr Wayne Kayler-Thomson.

"As we have witnessed with the recent bushfires, natural disasters can physically destroy or damage small businesses directly or cause significant loss of trade.

"VECCI thanks the Victorian Government for its contribution of \$500,000 to the Fund, which will go to bushfire-affected businesses and be matched by business donors. The Government has also assisted with advisor support, the Local Hero Recognition Grants of up to \$8,000 and marketing, events and infrastructure support for tourism announced today in conjunction with the Commonwealth.

"Normally Government financial assistance is made available to businesses directly destroyed or damaged, but those indirectly impacted are not eligible for such assistance even though trade can be seriously reduced or lost completely.

"The VBRF aims to support businesses that are suffering loss of trade but have not been damaged or destroyed by events such as the recent bushfires, and are therefore ineligible for government assistance. A panel of business and community representatives will assess grant applications for up to \$5,000 initially, in line with criteria that considers the size of the business, extent of hardship and the existence of other income.

"In addition to the VBRF, VECCI is working with the State Government to provide business advisors to businesses both directly and indirectly affected by the recent bushfires. Businesses affected that would like to speak to an advisor should contact Ed Walta on phone 0417 314 933 or email edwalta@netspace.net.au

"Ongoing business-to-business funds will be critical to the ongoing success of the Fund to cater for the needs of businesses impacted by the bushfires now as well as any impacted by natural disasters in the future." says Mr Kayler-Thomson.

To donate to the Fund or for further information, please phone VECCI Corporate Social Responsibility Manager Michelle Hayward on phone 03 8662 5227 or email mhayward@vecci.org.au

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