



From: Professor David de Kretser, A.C.,
Governor of Victoria

11th February 2009

A Message to the People of Victoria

These have been dreadful days in Victoria – days of unimaginable horror, of overwhelming terror and painful waiting. They have been days when Victoria's beautiful natural environment, usually the object of our affection and of our gratitude, has instead become the source of our fear and of our suffering.

As Jan and I have travelled around Victoria these last two weeks, we have been deeply affected by the destruction and death visited by fire upon this great Garden State. We have held those who grieve, encouraged those who seek and sat with those whose pain has no words.

We have also become deeply conscious of the shadow of sadness that now covers, not only those directly affected, but the entire State.

And yet, in the face of all this fear and suffering, destruction and death, we have also been moved by all that is good in our Victorian community. Stories of great courage, bravery, compassion and selflessness abound, performed by ordinary men and women as well as fire-fighters, police, ambulance officers and emergency service workers who have shown courage and heroism. Doctors and nurses, chaplains and counsellors, vets and rangers have tended to hurting bodies, hearts and minds.

With extraordinary generosity, Victorians from all walks of life have given their money and their food, their houses and their clothes, their time and their skills – even their own blood. To each and every Victorian who has responded to this great need – and to those who have come from interstate and overseas to help us – Jan and I say thank you.

The response to these dreadful events reminds us that in this diverse, multicultural society that is Victoria, we are all united by our common humanity, our solidarity with those in need, our compassion for those who suffer. For those who wish they could do more – and you are many, we know – your solidarity and compassion are, for now, enough. Your time will come in the weeks, months and years ahead, when this first shock has passed but the great needs continue: the need for friendship, for generosity and for hope.

Let us remember that, just as green life will one day return to the scorched Victorian earth, so too will these horrors pass and hope return. Just as the pain of grief and loss will endure, so too will the knowledge that, here in Victoria, that which is best in us will also endure.

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