



## VACCHO Media Release

# Bushfire Fund coordinated by peak Aboriginal health body, VACCHO to support the Aboriginal communities across Victoria

Friday 10 January 2020

### Central Bushfire Fund established by VACCHO

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) has, at the request of ACCOs in the Gippsland region, established a central point for funds directed towards bushfire relief for the Aboriginal community in Victoria.

VACCHO is the peak body and leading advocate for the health of Aboriginal peoples in Victoria with a membership of 31 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCOs). VACCHO also works closely with partner organisations, Government and non-Government Community sector organisations across Victoria and nationally.

Donations can be made to the Fund via the VACCHO website [www.vaccho.org.au/donate-now](http://www.vaccho.org.au/donate-now)

Acting VACCHO CEO, Trevor Pearce said Aboriginal communities have been significantly affected by the fires, in particular due to dispersed regional locations and less access to resources.

“As we continue to face a devastating situation with the bushfires across the State and the country, firstly our hearts and thoughts are with those directly affected and to the Community more broadly as this affects us as a whole community. We offer our condolences to the families that have lost loved ones in Victoria and NSW.

“Mr Pearce said there has been large-scale displacement of Aboriginal people and families in these regions, and the impact of this on the wellbeing of Communities, and concurrent expectations of our Community organisations cannot be underestimated. This includes PTSD, psychological distress and vicarious trauma.

“The additional strain on families extending support to others, in addition to the very real and tangible challenges such as housing, water, food, health and financial responsibilities is also considerable,” he said

“Whilst Aboriginal community organisations have received many offers of support, most lack the resources to manage individual requests whilst providing critical support services to the Community at this time.

“VACCHO Members organisations have been both impacted by the bush fires, and are playing an essential role in emergency relief and as first responder particularly. This role is expected to increase in the coming weeks. VACCHO will be coordinating support to ACCOs by working with our other member services to provide workforce support to address the immediate needs,” he said.

“VACCHO is following the lead of our Member organisations in the regions across Victoria. We would like to acknowledge the efforts and leadership shown by our CEOs and their staff in the affected regions, particularly in Gippsland. Your coordination and strength through what is an immensely distressing time is incredible and we all thank you.

“Jamie Williams (Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative) and David Morgan (Ramayuck District Aboriginal Cooperative) are emergency evacuation points and are providing direct relief to Community in their region as well as Community that have been relocated out of harm’s way. Tammy Bundle (Moogji Aboriginal Council East

**Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc.**

*VACCHO is the peak body for the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people living in Victoria.*

17-23 Sackville Street, Collingwood, VIC, 3066 P 03 9411 9411 F 03 9411 9599 [www.vaccho.org.au/news-media/mr](http://www.vaccho.org.au/news-media/mr)

Gippsland) Paula Morgan (Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health) and Suzie Squires (Lake Tyers Health and Children's Service) are still operating and providing on the ground assistance within the fire impacted areas.

"As a Community we need to acknowledge and recognise the courage shown by our Member teams in dealing and facing the fire personally, while still providing a service to the Community. ACCHOs on the ground are in the best position to provide Community lead responses and advise us of the support and assistance needed from VACCHO," said Mr. Pearce.

VACCHO has commenced targeted conversations with State and Federal Governments, to try to get appropriate support and assistance to areas most in need, as identified by Members. This includes calls for short and long-term recovery support.

"We are committed to working together at this challenging time and commend the courage and dedication you have all shown in supporting our communities," he said.

VACCHO has been asked to be the point of contact for all donations until such times that a Foundation is established. As you will no doubt appreciate their hands are full in assisting the community and will be relying on VACCHO to carry some the administrative load around this work. VACCHO has established a dedicated bank account that all donation requests can be directed towards.

ENDS

\*\*\*\*\*

Information contact: Trevor Pearce 0419 379 245

Media: Fleur Brown: 0419270863

About VACCHO: The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) is the peak body for Aboriginal health and wellbeing in the state of Victoria. VACCHO provides leadership in Community control and health equality for Aboriginal organisations and communities. We are a centre of expertise, policy advice, training and innovation in Aboriginal health. VACCHO advocates for the health equality and optimum health of all Aboriginal peoples in Victoria.