ACTU statement on ongoing bushfire crisis

media release

Statement on ongoing bushfire crisis

Attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Scott Connolly:

“Australian workers know the value of standing together, and this is more important than ever during this time of national crisis.

“The ACTU is calling on all union members to reach out to the tens of thousands of their fellow Australians effected by this crisis at their time of need.

“We are encouraging members who can do so to contribute financially to the Red Cross, the Victorian Bushfire Appeal, and to support their own union and local Trade and Labour Councils, who are already doing incredible work to support local communities.

“With many communities still dealing with the immediate and devastating impact of this crisis and others beginning to look forward towards recovery and reconstruction, workers, employers and families need support and understanding.

“No workers should ever be required to work in dangerous environments. Smoke levels are well beyond the hazardous range in huge areas of the country. Any workers, especially those who work outside, who have concerns about their safety should contact their union.

“Workers should be aware that the NES provides for unpaid leave for the full period of time that workers are engaged in volunteer firefighting or other emergency service work. Union negotiated Enterprise Bargaining Agreements will also often provide additional paid leave provisions.

“In some circumstances, workers will also be able to access personal leave if they are unable to return to work due to being evacuated or having nowhere to live, for instance if they or a family member have suffered mental or physical injury as a result of the fires.

“Under no circumstances can a worker or their employer already dealing with this devastating crisis face the added insult of being left without an income or a bill they cannot pay for a service they have not used or received.

“To make sure this happens, the Federal Government's response needs to make it clear that everyone impacted by this crisis is entitled to support and assistance and should not be left worse off. This should include ensuring that there is comprehensive relief from debt repayments, mortgages and utility bills while families get back on their feet.

“Any worker who faces issues with their bank, other lending institutions or who is fired from their job due to the fallout from these fires should immediately contact their union.”

Bushfire relief: How you can help those in need

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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