

Members coordinate emergency and school supply drives for fire victims

February 04, 2020

Students whose South Coast homes were destroyed by bushfire have returned to school with new backpacks filled with supplies thanks to a fundraiser coordinated by two members.

Casual teacher Allana Ferguson and Federation's Membership and Training Officer Guy McDermott's plans to holiday in Lake Conjola township over the New Year were abandoned due to advice not to travel to the district.

In response to news that at least 89 homes in the community had been destroyed, Allana — also a sports commentator and retired rugby league player — announced to her 61.8K followers on Instagram that urgent help was needed for families with “nothing to wear, nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep and nowhere to feel safe” and put a call out for donations for emergency supplies.

Guy said that within three days about \$100,000 worth of goods (such as food, water, clothes, toys, eye drops, masks and baby supplies) and \$70,000 was donated.



Other Federation members, family and friends helped with packing and distribution.

“We were able to put 2000 emergency supply packs on to boats that were taken into the area cut off by the bushfire. Later, under Rural Fire Service escort, generators and fuel bought with donated monies were distributed to the surrounding areas,” he said.

Six semi-trailers worth of donated goods were distributed in Lake Conjola, Batemans Bay, Moruya, Cobargo and other affected areas. A load of hay was trucked in for farmers.

“Once we had the emergency supply packs distributed we wanted to focus our attention on school-aged kids, to assist them to get back to school,” Guy said. “We asked people to donate backpacks filled with school supplies.”

In one instance the residents of one apartment complex provided 150 backpacks. The backpacks have been distributed via local community groups.

Kerri Carr is a staff writer