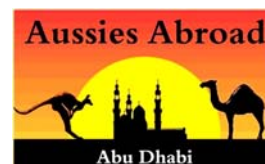


Media Release

Date: 15th February
Release: Immediate
Organisation: Aussies Abroad



Over 300 Australians and friends gathered together yesterday evening (Saturday 14 February 2009) at the Hiltonia in Abu Dhabi, to commemorate the victims and thousands of families left homeless in the wake of the devastating bushfires that swept through Victoria recently. They were there, at the candlelight vigil organised by Aussies Abroad, to show their support.

The Australian Ambassador, Jeremy Bruer, Aussies Abroad members and the Abu Dhabi community showed their support in spades by raising AED40,000, which has been forwarded to the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal 2009; the officially recognised charity organisation for the collection of support monies. The Ambassador led, by conducting the special reading, and the Boolas played the national anthem and read the poem, "My Country".

President of Aussies Abroad, Mr Mohammed Hourani said, "We were overwhelmed by the number that attended, given the very short notice we gave. People rallied together quickly to show their support. Australians know how awful bushfires can be, and how quickly life and property can be lost. The need to help is immediate, and the Abu Dhabi community, Australians and friends from many other lands came to the fore. It was a truly proud moment for us to see so many people come together in the true Aussie spirit and lend a helping hand to our fellow mates in need."

"We raised AED40,000 through donations and an auction. Etihad Airways were fantastic in donating two return tickets to Melbourne, we also auctioned a Socceroos signed jumper, a Ski Dubai pass, a special watch and a signed Menu by the leading Victorian Chef, Curtis Stone," he said.

Australians in Abu Dhabi wishing to donate to the appeal can do so directly to the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal 2009 link: www.redcross.org.au/vic or contact Aussies Abroad for more information.

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For more information on the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal 2009 link: www.redcross.org.au/vic