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### **Pastoral Letter – Tathra Bushfire**

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

As you know the township of Tathra has been devastated by a bushfire in the past week. The lives of many have been turned upside down. After the initial shock of the event some are now dealing with the real grief of losing everything, while others are coping with severe guilt that their house was spared while their neighbour's was not.

Members of our church have been on the ground offering care and support from the beginning, including folk who had been evacuated because of the fire. We publicly acknowledge the role of our local clergy and many volunteers in the Anglicare Disaster Recovery Teams who were mobilised to support people in a time of intense uncertainty.

Some members of our Diocese have contacted us to find out what is happening so that they can offer help. We have been conferring with the Reverend Stuart Haynes, who is our Priest in Charge at Bega, to devise a short-term and longer term response.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring that Stuart and the parish of Bega are properly resourced to give the leadership and care needed especially in the initial three months. We are working on a short term plan and will give you details of how you can assist when the details are finalised. Stuart has already opened St Martin's Tathra as a drop in centre and it will become a base for material, prayer and counselling support. Members of the Anglicare Disaster Recovery Team will be deployed to begin door to door visiting to ascertain needs and direct residents to where they can find help.

Secondly, Anglicare will launch an appeal in the next week to specifically raise funds so that folk in the area can access properly qualified counsellors to help them process any trauma. Anglicare's experience is that following a natural disaster, people require trauma counselling assistance in the medium to long term, so we want to be ready to offer help when they really need it.

Finally, I urge you to continue to pray for this community and the small congregation which is also grieving about loss and damage sustained by its own members. Ask God to give them the grace to be salt and light for Jesus at this time. Pray also for the ecumenical service planned for Easter Day at the local surf club that it might be an opportunity for healing to begin.

Prayerfully yours,

*+ Trevor*

Vicar General  
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