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Immediate release

## **DISTRICT NURSES JOIN BUSHFIRE EFFORT**

Melbourne's largest home nursing organisation, Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS), has joined the effort to bring relief to victims of the bushfires.

CEO Dan Romanis said that, as the tragic aftermath of the bushfires continues to unfold, healthcare workers such as district nurses will play a significant role in caring for communities devastated by the fires.

"RDNS is one of many organisations who have joined the massive effort to provide care to bushfire victims and their communities. We are already seeing people admitted into our care as hospitals discharge patients to make way for the victims of this tragedy," he explained.

Mr Romanis said that current clients of the organisation were being checked on as circumstances allowed. Nurses from RDNS care for around 7,000 people in their homes every day.

"Most of those we care for are the elderly and the frail and many live alone. Obviously we have a concern about our clients given their increased level of vulnerability," he said. "We have been checking on clients in affected areas as the situation allows, but the going is slow."

In other developments, Mr Romanis said:

- RDNS nurses have been made available to general practice surgeries in affected areas to assist doctors with medical care and enable GPs to see more patients;
- Nurses from across the organisation have been asked to register their interest in providing extra nursing and healthcare to affected communities over the coming days and weeks;
- Nurses and social workers from RDNS' Diamond Valley site, equipped with medical supplies, were deployed to the Whittlesea Community Relief Centre and Diamond Creek Relief Centre to provide nursing care and assist local recovery efforts. Local fire authorities immediately relayed some of the medical supplies to the Kinglake area.

Mr Romanis also said that some RDNS staff had been fulfilling their role as district nurses as well as serving as CFA volunteers.

A number of staff from the organisation have been personally affected by the tragedy, losing houses and property. But a relieved Mr Romanis said that all staff have been accounted for.

RDNS will be providing material and other support to staff directly affected by the fires. All RDNS staff have access to counselling services, he explained.

"I have no doubt that many of our nurses will see the direct effects of this tragedy over the coming days and weeks and will play a role in helping people in the recovery process. This is a tragedy that touches each of us deeply," he said.

Concerned clients of RDNS or their carers can call the service on 1300 33 44 55.

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