



We believe in the power of  
inspired young people

Dear YMCA Colleagues

### **Bushfire Update from Australia**

The YMCAs of Australia are so grateful for the messages and offers of support from our YMCA colleagues from around the world.

It has been a devastating start to the new decade in Australia as we experience the fact that our country, its people, our land and our animals are suffering from terrible bushfires across the nation.

But as Australians, we are strong and resilient.

We want to let you know that all our YMCA people are safe. We have been lucky to have only suffered minimal property loss but we are now facing the challenges of poor air quality due to the smoke.

Safety and offering safe spaces has been the focus of the Y during this bushfire emergency response period - with Y sites in bushfire affected areas across Vic, NSW, ACT and SA. The wellbeing of staff and communities by evacuation and temporarily closing centres in danger has been our absolute priority. We have also been able to offer safe spaces and accommodation for people around our fire-affected communities, utilising a number of our sites as emergency centres. Some YMCA staff have lost houses and property and this saddens us all.

This tragedy has also seen so many acts of human kindness and the most beautiful side of humanity coming together. Our firefighters, emergency services volunteers, the defence force and firefighters from the USA have worked together to keep people safe from harm.

The Y in Australia is now considering how we can support communities, when rebuilding is possible, and how the Y can be there to support young people and families as they recover from this tragedy. Our longer term priority is to ensure our response is congruent with what the communities require, to assist in rebuilding and supporting their wellbeing. The Y was involved in the rebuilding of communities after the 2009 bushfires, and we're committed to doing the same after these bushfires.

There is one thing we would like all YMCAs to consider with us and that is the fact that we, in Australia, have been experiencing the emergency that climate change is causing to our planet.

We need to act globally and collaboratively to do what is required.

Last year we saw young people rise and march all over the world, calling for immediate action on climate change. Our own young people in Australia have called out to the YMCA to



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recognise that climate action is required. If we believe in the power of inspired young people we need to listen and act.

As stewards of this planet it is time for us to challenge political and business leaders to listen and consider more sustainable practices.

In Australia we are still in crisis. We have only commenced summer with February and March being the hottest months, and they are yet to come. We are experiencing what many of you already know and that is “Climate change has no borders and it ultimately affects everyone, which is why global action and collaboration is needed more than ever.”

Thank you again for reaching out to us in Australia. We look forward to working with you as part of the global YMCA Movement.

Yours sincerely,

**Melinda Crole**  
Chief Executive Officer  
YMCA Australia