



27 October 2010

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Our Ref:

Dear Ms McLennan

*Catherine*

## ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS REGARDING THE 'THANK YOU' GIFT

1. *What was your, and by extension your Government's involvement in the Thank You Melbourne and Victoria concert of April 2010?*

I was initially approached by Ross Buchanan. Ross and Wally Spezza of the Kinglake Ranges community were planning to put on an event to acknowledge and thank the people of Melbourne and Victoria for their donations and ongoing support since the Black Saturday and Gippsland fires, and Ross asked me if our Government could help to support this event.

I thought this was an incredibly gracious gesture and our Government was able to provide \$35,000 in assistance to Ross and Wally to organise and stage the event.

As for the day itself, I attended the concert early in the evening where I watched a performance by Pay Dirt, received 'The Gift' on behalf of the people of Victoria from the artists Ray Brassier and Glenn Barlow, and listened to Cam Tapp and local school children sing their beautiful song "Lest We Forget."

2. *Do you think that concerts such as this have aided the Victorian community when it comes to recovery and renewal?*

The community members involved in the Thank You Melbourne and Victoria event said they wanted to offer the community an insight into their personal experiences, and invite them to follow their recovery journey since those awful fires. It also gave artists (many of whom were directly affected by the bushfires) a positive and collective focus after the first anniversary of the Black Saturday fires.

In the aftermath of the fires I think many of us were reminded of the power of music and art in expressing the very deepest feelings, and its important role in the process of healing and recovering. Artists from across the world donated their performances to raise money and spirits for bushfire-affected communities. This included everything from the major Sound Relief concerts in Melbourne and Sydney to performances in local communities.

The Thank You Melbourne and Victoria concert gave local artists an opportunity for their own musical, poetry and lyrical reflections.

3. *Why did you decide to pass on the Thank You Gift to Museum Victoria?*

The organisers of the Thank You Melbourne and Victoria event were keen to see the sculpture displayed in a place where all Victorians and visitors to our State could see it – they wanted it to become a symbol of the gratitude of bushfire affected communities to the people of Victoria for their generosity in the aftermath of Black Saturday.



I thought 'The Gift' would be a valuable addition to Museum Victoria's Victorian Bushfires Collection where children, families and visitors to our State from interstate and overseas would be able to see it and learn more about our nation's worst natural disaster.

*4. The Thank You concert emerged because fire-affected people from the Kinglake community wanted to thank the wider Victorian community for their generosity and support. Reflecting on your travels throughout both urban and regional Victoria, do you think that the tragedy of the Victorian bushfires has united the Victorian community?*

I travelled around Victoria visiting the people and communities in the days, weeks and months after the terrible Black Saturday and Gippsland fires.

One of the things I've said about those fires is that we saw the very worst of what nature can do and the immense human suffering it caused but throughout that difficult time we also saw and experienced the very best of human nature.

We saw communities come together to help each other, we saw people who had suffered so much themselves in those fires go out of their way to help a neighbour and we saw people from Victoria, Australia and across the world, some of them with little money of their own, donate so generously to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund.

Victorians have shown such compassion and resilience. I feel so proud to be Victorian and to lead a State of such generous, caring communities.

*5. How important is it that we preserve and document our community stories relating to the Victorian bushfires of 2009?*

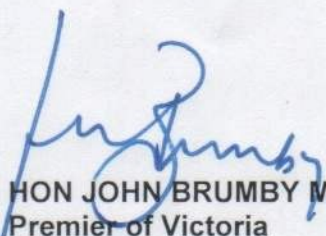
We will continue to stand by the people and communities affected by the Black Saturday fires and support them as they rebuild their lives, homes and communities. And we will never forget the people who lost their lives.

Those fires were the worst natural disaster Australia has ever experienced and it's important we preserve and document those stories of hope, stories of recovery and stories of the challenges our communities have faced.

Two months after Black Saturday, I visited the Marysville Historical Society to announce, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, that we would provide up to \$4.5 million towards the collection and collation of photographs, artworks, artefacts and other relevant historical memorabilia in affected communities.

Providing support to protect that history, to help our young people learn about those fires is very important and I'm advised that the Marysville Historical Society has now collected hundreds of items from across the world to replace those lost on Black Saturday.

Yours sincerely



HON JOHN BRUMBY MP  
Premier of Victoria