

pact:

ISSUE 09 . FEBRUARY 2009



- The Westpac Foundation – Going Feral! p3



- Westpac makes a stand for human rights p2



- Westpac takes action in response to Bushfire Crisis p1
- Access all areas p1
- Stay safe this summer p2
- Westpac sees red p3

Westpac takes action in response to Bushfire Crisis

Westpac has taken immediate action in response to the tragic bushfires in Victoria. The Westpac Group donated \$1 million to the 2009 Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund, set up by the Victorian Government. Westpac has also committed to match all employee donations to support victims of the Victorian bushfires as part of the Westpac Matching Gifts program.

The bank will also issue its Disaster Relief Package for impacted Westpac customers and is working on a range of other options to provide assistance, including making staff available to support community services operating in impacted areas.

"Our thoughts are with all those people who have been affected by these devastating bushfires," Westpac Group Executive Retail and Business Banking, Peter Hanlon said.

"Westpac will provide all assistance possible to support affected customers and local communities through these very difficult times."

"The Bank understands how their customers' financial circumstances are also affected by natural disasters."

Disaster relief

The relief packages offers immediate support to affected Westpac customers including suspended repayments, restructuring of loans and permit early termination of Term Deposits without penalties.

Access all areas

The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show 20 per cent of the population, almost four million people, have a disability.

Westpac is taking a leadership role in making its business accessible to customers, while employing the best person for their job - whether they have a disability, or not.

In December, Westpac sponsored the NSW Government's Don't DIS my ABILITY campaign, for the fourth year in a row. Employees got involved with several events that took place in various Westpac locations during 3-5 December, for the International Day for People with a Disability.



Earlier this year, Westpac also activated similar packages for customers seriously affected by the bad weather and flooding that occurred in far North Queensland and Fiji, and those affected by bushfires in Port Lincoln, South Australia.

Graham Paterson, Head of Group Sustainability and Community Involvement says "These special relief packages are in place to look after our customers' needs and also the community when they need us. The Bank understands how their customers' financial circumstances are also affected by natural disasters."

Employees give on Big Red Heart Day

Graham Paterson says there's been an overwhelming response from employees to help our communities and customers impacted by the bushfires.

"Employees banded together organising fundraising for their teams and customers by wearing red to work on 'Big Red Heart Day' and making donations to support the Victoria Bushfire Relief Appeal. Each employee donation will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Westpac Group."

- For more information, see Westpac's media releases available from www.westpac.com.au

The International Day for People with a Disability is a United Nations-sanctioned day that aims to promote an understanding of disability issues. The most recent campaign is about the rights of people with disability to work and be employed in an environment that's accessible and accepting.

Proactive approach benefits all

Kitty Buchanan, Lead Consultant, Diversity, says Westpac is global leader in responsible business practices.

"We're committed to building a business where customers with a disability have access to our

products and services, and employees are chosen on the basis of the best person for the role. We've been very active in this area for some time now, as part of our Accessibility Action Plan.

"Westpac has more than 7 million customers and 27,000 employees including about 10 per cent who have a disability and 9 per cent who have a caring responsibility. Our proactive approach benefits everyone and helps build the long term sustainability of our business."

- For more information, see Westpac's Accessibility Action plan on the Westpac website: www.westpac.com.au

Stay safe this summer

Did you know Saturday is the deadliest day of the week in the surf? This is one of the findings of Surf Life Saving's 2008 National Coastal Safety Report, supported by Westpac, which found that a quarter of all coastal drowning incidents occur on Saturdays.

The report, which is conducted annually, has revealed some alarming trends relating to coastal drowning deaths. 88 lives were lost along the Australian coast during 2007-2008 due to a drowning death – a seven per cent increase on the previous season.

Be surf safe

In response to these findings, Westpac is running a national campaign to remind Australians of the need to be surf safe and to swim between the flags at all times.

Samantha Brown, Head of Westpac's Community Involvement, said: "Surf safety messages are at the centre of Surf Life Saving Australia and Westpac's Surf Safety campaign, spearheaded by retired Olympic champion Grant Hackett who is also now one of Westpac's Private Bankers."

Public awareness driven through branches

Westpac's surf safety campaign is running throughout the summer and includes:

- A surf safety DVD hosted by Grant Hackett, which is airing in branches
- Surf safety wallet cards with instructions for resuscitation and how to spot rips are available free of charge from Westpac branches
- Surf safety message on Westpac statement envelopes and teller receipts



Grant is a strong advocate of swimming between the flags: "We have the best beaches and coastlines in the world and they are there to be enjoyed.

"Westpac's free surf safety reminder cards provide a useful guide for how to spot a rip."

"Swimming between the flags at a patrolled beach is essential and if I can get one person to take on board that message, then I'll be very happy," said Grant.

The dangers of rips

While the surf safety message is relevant to all, the report reveals that men are more likely to get into trouble in the surf, representing nine out of ten fatalities. According to Surf Lifesaver of the Year, Andrew Bedford, this could

be attributed to men taking more risks in the surf and having a tendency to overrate their swimming ability.

"This demonstrates only too well that age and strength are no protection in the surf," Andrew says. "All beachgoers need to be aware of surf safety and swim between the flags this summer to prevent more lives being lost.

"Rips continue to pose one of the greatest risks on Australian beaches. People are aware of the dangers of rips, but cannot necessarily identify them or know how to get out of them.

"Westpac's free surf safety reminder cards provide a useful guide for how to spot a rip."

- More information is available on the Westpac website www.westpac.com.au/surfsafety or you can pick up a surf safety wallet card from any Westpac branch.

Westpac makes a stand for human rights

Westpac has again stepped up as a leader in sustainability, this time being recognised as one of 230 global companies to make a public commitment to human rights.

This recognition comes from the Realizing Rights and Business and Human Rights Resource Centre with this year being the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Centre's online library covers more than 4000 companies in over 180 countries. It's used by a global audience of opinion leaders for research around promoting awareness of business and human rights.

Respect expected from employees

Graham Paterson, Head of Group Sustainability & Community Involvement says Westpac's belief is that we must respect basic human rights in everything we do.

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"This is articulated in Our Principles for Doing Business, which sets out how the Westpac Group aims to conduct itself across our

business," Graham says. The Principles ensure transparency, fair dealing and the protection of stakeholder interests".

"Our Principles also acknowledge key global initiatives we have aligned to, such as the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Global Compact. These promote responsible business practice and commitment to human rights."

- For more information see Westpac's policy on human rights, and the full list of commitments we've made available from www.westpac.com.au/corporateresponsibility

pact:

ISSUE 09. FEBRUARY 2009

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The Westpac Foundation – Going Feral!

Project grants from the Westpac Foundation help not-for-profit groups address the causes of social problems in disadvantaged communities across Australia. The Foundation is looking for new projects to support in 2010.

The Westpac Foundation is a charitable trust which invests to create and sustain social enterprise in disadvantaged communities in Australia.

Each year the Foundation provides grants to help not-for-profit organisations establish community based projects. Since the Foundation began in 1999, over \$19m has been awarded in grants to over 128 organisations. The main focus is to help organisations address the causes of social problems in disadvantaged communities.

The Project

One of these organisations is Feral Arts, a not-for-profit Brisbane media company, who have developed PlaceStories, a digital storytelling system that allows members to create digital stories about places, people and projects using photographs, audio and online communication tools.

Digital Landcare is a three-year arts and environment sector partnership exploring innovative ways of enhancing the viability and sustainability of rural communities across Australia.

Making an Impact

"The strategy underpinning the project is to create a dynamic, environment-focused digital storytelling network, connecting rural communities across Australia and the globe, empowering them to engage in a wide range of social, economic and environmental challenges. This growing PlaceStories environmental system will enable rural communities to promote their 'places', and their practices through digital stories, and engage more actively and more effectively in emerging online income generating and enterprise opportunities", explains Kevin Guy, of Feral Arts.

If you are aware of an organisation that requires funding and is aligned with the Foundation's funding priorities contact the Foundation for a copy of the guidelines.

The ability to share this information through PlaceStories provides a link to a much broader



community which would not be possible through any other medium due to the vast distances experienced by regional Australia.

- If you are aware of an organisation that requires funding and is aligned with the Foundation's funding priorities contact the Foundation for a copy of the guidelines. More information on the Westpac Foundation is available from the Westpac website: www.westpac.com.au/westpacfoundation
- More information on the Digital Landcare Project is available from: www.feralarts.com.au

Westpac sees red

The Pacific Banking teams were seeing red in December– but not in frustration! The teams wore red in recognition of World AIDS Week which started on 1 December, World AIDS Day and in solidarity for Pacific island nations affected by the disease.

In 1988, the World Health Organization declared the first World AIDS Day in an effort to raise public awareness about HIV/AIDS issues, including the need for support and understanding for people living with HIV/AIDS. The day is also an opportunity to highlight the need for continued development of education and prevention initiatives.



International Service Centre team in Port Moresby, PNG

Over the past 20 years, World AIDS Day has been established as one of the world's most successful commemorative days. It is now

recognised and observed by millions of people in more than 190 countries around the globe.

Westpac Papua New Guinea recently launched its HIV/AIDS Management Policy to address the growing concern of the disease in that country. Their 12-member HIV/AIDS working committee now has the responsibility of making the policy 'come to life'. This includes creating awareness of the issue, fostering a non-discriminatory work environment for employees, customers and the public as well as practical applications to minimise its spread.

- More information on World AIDS Day is available from: www.worldaidsday.org