

Letter from KI: Greener grass and enriched marriages after bushfires



Kangaroo Island is physically greener thanks to the rain, but how is the recovery really going?

It is October and bushfire-affected farmers and individuals have been pushing on for 10 difficult months following the loss of around half of the island's 4,400 square kilometres of land area.

Some people are living in barely insulated shipping container pods surrounded by the damaged properties they love. Others are separated from their families as temporary accommodation had to be sought for wives and children an hour's travel from the property.

Some people are still visited in the middle of the night by the trauma of those harrowing bushfire days. Others are well on the way to rebuilding.

There is no "one size fits all" description of life in the bushfire ravaged areas of the island, but what we do know is that the events touched many, if not most, people on the island.

In the earliest days of recovery there was a great outpouring of love and generosity from islanders, Aussies and people further abroad.

This amazing community-building effort diminished (but didn't completely disappear) as COVID-19 struck Australia. Assistance rebuilding fences and grants to help rebuild sheds, and homes continues even today. But in general islanders are feeling tired.

As part of our bushfire response, KI Anglicans have made use of many generous donations from across the diocese, state, country, and world, to practically help our traumatised community.

We want to thank the many parishes and individuals who have donated funds and prayed to our faithful God to help our community to recover.

KI Anglicans have donated thousands of dollars toward helping children and families in the most fire-affected areas out west. We recently put $10,000 toward purchasing air-conditioners for those toughing it out in the shipping container pods which will become furnaces during summer.

And now we are using other donations to run a marriage course.

After traumatic events such as this there is usually a heavy toll on marriages and relationships, which can continue to be seen for up to five years after the catastrophe.

The Marriage Course will enrich relationships and families to help them weather the storms and struggles that we still face as the island recovers from the bushfires and COVID-19 tensions.

The grass is greener where you water it.

As the island greens up after the rains we pray that couples will spend some time "watering" their relationships, revitalising their family and love lives and therefore building a stronger community.

Rev'd Brad Henley is Priest-in-Charge of the Anglican Parish of Kangaroo Island

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