

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

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### **Care beyond the ward: Nurse helps fire-affected communities rebuild**

When bushfires swept through regional Victoria this summer, leaving farming towns and wildlife habitats scorched, nurse Talwinder Singh traded his scrubs for a high-vis vest.

Between shifts as a registered nurse and clinical care coordinator at Mercy Place Keon Park, Talwinder spent his days volunteering with Australian Sikh Support, delivering food, water and essentials to those who'd lost almost everything.

"On the first day of the fires, we managed to get 30 boxes of family-sized pizzas and crates of water to families and firefighters at local community halls," Talwinder said.

"Since then, we've travelled through places like Yea, Highlands, Ruffy, Seymour and even to Cowes on Phillip Island after the grassfire there. I also drove to Geelong to check whether support was needed for people affected by the Otways fires."

Talwinder said his motivation comes from his faith and his profession.

"Volunteering isn't just about helping others, it's how I live my faith," he said. "Sikhism teaches that selfless service is a duty, and nursing is another form of that service. Both come from the same place: compassion and care for others."

Since moving to Australia in 2018, Talwinder has volunteered with Australian Sikh Support, a not-for-profit guided by Sikh principles of community and service. The group mobilises during bushfires, floods and droughts to deliver supplies, fundraise and help rebuild.

"Our volunteers take whatever vehicles we have, load them with supplies and head straight into affected towns," Talwinder said. "It's physical work, but it's also emotional, listening to people and letting them know they're not alone."

He said it means a lot to have a workplace that understands and supports those values.

"At Mercy, compassion, teamwork and stewardship aren't just words; they really matter," Talwinder said. "It's important that my faith and work align. Nursing is about care every day, and volunteering extends that care into the community."

Talwinder's colleagues at Mercy Place Keon Park were so inspired by his commitment that they organised a donation drive, contributing more than \$1,000 worth of essential goods for bushfire-affected families.

"We're incredibly proud of Talwinder," said Robert Gvojcic, Precinct Manager at Mercy Place Keon Park. "His dedication inspired the team to donate blankets, doonas, clothes, toiletries and kitchen supplies. Knowing that around 900 people have received help from the group in January alone is something the whole Mercy team feels proud to support."

The donated items were distributed to households affected by the Central Victorian bushfires through Australian Sikh Support, with deliveries continuing as recovery efforts go on.

“Every trip out there reminds me how strongly communities pull together in times of crisis,” Talwinder said. “You see ordinary people doing extraordinary things and that makes all the travel, the late nights, and the heavy lifting worth it.”

**ENDS**