



ASOFIA conference gives generously to Fijian flood victims

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Hearing about the shock and devastation in Fiji, after enduring the worst flooding in decades, inspired a remarkable sign of camaraderie and support from delegates of the Australian Shop and Office Fitting Industry Association's (ASOFIA) 17th National Conference recently held in Natadola, Fiji.

After hearing the remarkable, yet devastating stories of survival to withstand the floods, the ASOFIA conference group, consisting of 120 members, decided to be proactive and provide something tangible to ease their host country's troubles during this time of adversity.

Working closely with Operation Foundation and Pacific Smiles, ASOFIA has moved quickly to support efforts to get food, clothing and bedding to those in desperate need – all possible due to the generosity of its members.

Touching the hearts of the many family men and women at the conference, the story of a father who had to push through his home's tin roof to allow his family to escape with their lives prompted real action.

An auction, organised at the very last minute, was held at the conference. Extraordinarily, the delegates managed to raise AU\$35,750 which has been used to buy food, mattresses and kerosene for those left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The generosity and enthusiasm of members, in both donating auction items and bidding on items, was awe-inspiring.

Gerard Ryan, CEO of ASOFIA said in addition to the money raised, many delegates who attended the conference came armed with bags of clothes, toys, fishing equipment and school supplies in readiness to help.

"We have chosen to work with the organisations on the ground to ensure that every single cent raised by the ASOFIA members, gets to those who need it most.

"It was a very humbling experience to go into the villages and rural areas to meet some of the people who had everything they owned washed away, literally within seconds. Whilst the physical devastation is obvious, the trauma of losing everything and for some people included family members without warning, was heart wrenching. Even though life has continued to go on, with little resources and assistance, our time there has really showcased to all of us the strength of the Fijian spirit," said Mr Ryan.

ASOFIA will continue to remain up to date with the disaster relief effort and the distribution of monies and necessities.



The Australian government has provided just \$1Million to the cause, further highlighting the relative scale of the ASOFIA donation and support.

Continuous rain started on 30 Mar 2012 in Fiji which was first caused by tropical depression TD17F and then by Tropical Cyclone Daphne, which passed at a distance. The rains caused widespread flooding in the western division from Rakiraki to Sigatoka and prompted the Government to declare a state of natural disaster on 1 April 2012.

At the height of the flood, 15,000 people took shelter in evacuation centres. As of 31 March, 2407 evacuees were housed in 49 evacuation centres with the death toll continuing to rise.

To donate visit: www.operationfoundation.org.fj/flood

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Notes to the editor:

For more information, please visit the below websites.

- Operation Foundation page: <http://www.operationfoundation.org.fj/>
- Pacific Smiles pages: <http://www.pacificsmiles.org/>
- ASOFIA page: www.asofia.com.au
- ASOFIA Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ASOFIANational

Images: (more high res images are available upon request).

ASOFIA logo



Delegates from the ASOFIA 17th National Conference





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