

SecondBite first in

Distressed aid workers see fires aftermath

Cathy Nilbett
nilbett@leadernewspapers.com.au

WORKERS of a Kensington charity were among the first people allowed into communities destroyed by bushfire in the nation's worst natural disaster.

Not-for-profit charity SecondBite was on the front line witnessing the devastation soon after the disaster hit, delivering food to people in fire-ravaged areas including Kinglake, Whittlesea and Flowerdale.

Executive director Katy Barfield went to Kinglake on Tuesday, before residents were able to return, in a police convoy that brought supplies to the area.

"It is just nothingness," Ms Barfield said of the burnt areas.

"It's like burnt matchsticks and eerily quiet. There's no life at all and there are still smouldering trees."

SecondBite redistributes fresh surplus food from markets, fruit shops and businesses across Melbourne to the needy.

Ms Barfield said SecondBite had delivered nine tonnes of food in four days last week, about double the usual amount.

Staff will continue to deliver to fire areas as well as keeping up their normal deliveries to Melbourne's needy.

She said they delivered food to the CFA as well.

"We asked what was needed ... that way there is no waste," Ms Barfield said.

She said it was "very distressing" to see the aftermath of the fire.

"It was very dire and there were burnt out cars everywhere," she said.

"Then there are really odd pockets where a house is still standing.

"There are animals that haven't been able



Katy Barfield of
SecondBite.
Picture: ANGIE
BASDEKIS N34MV213

RIGHT: SecondBite helped bushfire victims in Flowerdale, where the Dowling family visits the burnt remains of their house for the first time.

Picture: JASON EDWARDS N34MS503

to get out of paddocks and horses and dogs have just been burnt alive."

Ms Barfield said the impact of what she saw took a while to sink in.

"Those cars had people in them, those pets were loved and those homes were prized possessions," she said.

"When I got home at night and sat on the

sofa I burst into tears. The reality of seeing children crying because they'd lost their parents or their pets and seeing parents crying because they'd lost their children sunk in."

To make food or money donations go to secondbite.org

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