

## **Sir Peter sets spirits ablaze on fire visit Jamie First**

The new Governor-General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, has lent his support to bushfire charity BlazeAid during a visit to a farm at Wallan.

Wearing an open-neck shirt and cap, the head of state praised thousands of volunteers who helped rebuild the fences of those affected by natural disasters.

“You’ve got to be a bit careful not to get emotional,” Sir Peter said.

“It’s so easy to be overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit.”

In his first public engagement since becoming the Governor-General, Sir Peter went to the Wallan property of young couple, Scott and Liz Pape, who lost their home, stock and most of their fences in the bushfires in early February.

“I’m very uplifted,” Sir Peter said. “To see a brilliant young Australian family being helped by people of all ages ... doing hard manual labour, I think they’re champions.

“It says that we are not just an entitlement society, we are a society that gets out of its armchair, gets out the front door and finds people that need help.”

Mr Pape said he wouldn’t have been able to rebuild without BlazeAid.

“They’ve helped us through a tough situation,” he said. “We lost everything. To have them come in and work shoulder to shoulder with us and get things done has been great.”

BlazeAid was started by Kevin and Rhonda Butler in 2009 following the Black Saturday bushfires, during which they lost fencing on their Kilmore East farm.

Over five years, the not-for-profit organisation has reconstructed fences at more than 2000 rural properties, thanks to 11,000 volunteers.

Hoping to aid as many farmers as he can, Mr Butler is now starting a hay drive. “We are in desperate need. We will organise everything. You just send the hay and an invoice, and we will pay.”

Mr Butler said he just wants to support “mates who have a hard time”.

To help BlazeAid, contact Lyn Bailey on 0400 833 262 or Kevin Ryan on (03) 5789 1287, or visit [blazeaid.com.au](http://blazeaid.com.au)