



Legislators Send Letter Pledging Support to Australia Amid Ongoing Bushfire Crisis

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WASHINGTON – Today, the co-chairs of the bicameral Friends of Australia Caucus, which include U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Roy Blunt (R-MO), and U.S. Representatives Joe Courtney (D-CT-02) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI-08), sent a letter to Australian Ambassador Joe Hockey expressing their full support for the people of Australia during the ongoing bushfire crisis. Durbin, Blunt, Courtney, and Gallagher met with Ambassador Hockey this morning, and a photo of that meeting is available [here](#).

“Australia has not only stood alongside U.S. troops for decades on battlefields around the world, but has also done the same on the home front. Nearly 140 Australian and New Zealand firefighters worked alongside their U.S. counterparts in August 2018 in California, Oregon, and Washington as wildfires threatened Americans up and down the Pacific Coast. Australians deserve to know that they can always count on brave Americans to return the favor by standing with them as they defend their own nation abroad, at sea, and at home,” the Members wrote.

A bipartisan group of more than 30 Members of the Senate and House cosigned the letter. Full text of the letter is available [here](#) and below:

January 9, 2020

Dear Ambassador Hockey,

As bipartisan members of the Friends of Australia Caucus, we write to express our full support for the people of Australia during the ongoing bushfire crisis. All of us believe, regardless of party or constituency, that as one of our country’s closest allies, Australia deserves any and all resources at our nation’s disposal to combat more than 100 on-

going fires that have claimed the lives of nearly 20 Australians and burned more than 14 million acres this fire season.

We want you to know that the people we represent are closely watching this terrible event in which forecasted triple digit temperatures, high winds, and lightning have the potential to create megafires that will threaten thousands of lives and properties. The possibility of a dangerous surge in fire activity is high and we support the deployment of any additional assets the United States can bring to bear to help.

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According to the National Interagency Fire Center, roughly 100 firefighters have been sent to Australia over the last four weeks, with more than 50 additional men and women planning to be deployed next week. Further, we welcome President Trump's pledge of full U.S. support to Prime Minister Morrison on Monday, and will continue to work to support a federal response to the crisis. We are proud to see Americans shouldering this enormous burden and stand ready to assist in the deployment of all appropriate resources available through federal agencies, such as the Department of State or Department of Defense to abate this disaster. Australians have always answered our calls for support and we will work to ensure that our nation does the same.

We look forward to continuing our work on a bipartisan basis to strengthen the bonds between the United States and Australia.