STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:
The City Council will consider directing staff to identify and disseminate resources for the community to respond and donate to those impacted by the wildfires in Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1) Direct staff to identify resources to help those impacted by the wildfires in Australia, including, organizations where community members can donate; locations where community members can contribute necessities; and agencies helping displaced animals and evacuees recover.
2) Direct the Communications Department to utilize all appropriate communication tools to promote the resources including, but not limited to, the City’s website and social media tools.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:
Since September 2019, the wildfires in Australia have killed over one billion animals, destroyed over 2,000 homes, and claimed the lives of at least thirty-three people – including eleven firefighters. Although Australia typically experiences a periodic “fire season” that runs from December to March, this year’s season has been particularly catastrophic and has been fueled by record-breaking temperatures and months of severe drought. Over forty million acres of green landscape have been burned. This is an unprecedented international crisis in which air quality standards have dangerously deteriorated, and many environmental specialists worry that some of the damage could be irreparable. In West Hollywood, we are a community of action, and we are determined to take the initiative to help those displaced and impacted by this destructive disaster.

In 2005, following Hurricane Katrina, the City Council implemented a program called “West Hollywood Responds” aimed at responding to national disasters. The success of that program proved that the City of West Hollywood is a city that cares deeply about its citizens and is known for providing support and respect worldwide. Recognizing the
ongoing natural disaster in Australia, the City will reinstate the West Hollywood Responds program and provide the community with resources to accredited charities that are currently collecting donations for those impacted by the wildfires in Australia. Some organizations collecting donations include:

- The Australian Red Cross ([https://www.redcross.org.au/](https://www.redcross.org.au/)) is accepting donations to its Disaster Relief and Recovery Fund, which has helped to send 1,285 staff members and volunteers to communities affected by the fires and to provide support to displaced people sheltering in more than 69 evacuation and recovery centers. Volunteering roles are also possible.

- GIVIT ([http://www.givit.org.au/](http://www.givit.org.au/)) is an Australian organization that matches donated goods with items that are specifically requested by victims of the fires. People have asked for things like car batteries, fence posts and gas pumps.

- Salvation Army Australia ([https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/](https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/)) advises donors to send money instead of goods because of the logistical difficulties of storing and distributing goods in areas affected by disasters. Donations are funneled to various forms of assistance, including mental health support and housing.

- NSW Rural Fire Service ([https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/support-your-local-brigade](https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/volunteer/support-your-local-brigade)) includes firefighters and community workers in rural fire brigades that are in the thick of it. Donations are directed to emergency efforts and nonemergency community work.

- RSPCA New South Wales ([https://www.rspcansw.org.au/](https://www.rspcansw.org.au/)) has veterinarians, inspectors, and staff currently helping to evacuate animals and livestock from affected areas in New South Wales, and will begin to return to areas where the fires have already burned to assess the damage.


**CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:**

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-5: Support People through Social Services.
- OSP-11: Community Education.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:
• HS-1: Maintain and pursue humane social policies and social services that address the needs of the community.
• G-1: Ensure that the community is active and engaged in the decision-making process.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:
N/A.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:
N/A.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:
The recommendations in this report aim to provide the community with appropriate resources to contribute during the current crisis in Australia.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:
COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

FISCAL IMPACT:
None at this time.