

# Fire tragedy hits hard

By LAURA TOMLINSON

AS Maranatha Christian College raised funds for victims of the Victorian bushfires, the most the average student knew of the devastation was confronting images on television.

For Year 9 student Jesse Flatley, who placed a \$10 note in a donation bucket to help those who survived, the devastation was closer to home.

Two of Jesse's former school friends did not survive the firestorm that hit Kinglake — and the still images and videos on television pan over places he used to see every day.

Until three years ago Jesse lived in Kinglake with his family and grandmother and among the burnt-out remains of Kinglake, Jesse undoubtedly has countless memories of places that are now ash and rubble.

In Kinglake the quiet teen made lifelong friends including siblings Mackenzie, 15, and Neeve Buchanan, 9, who reportedly died while huddled in

their grandmother Jenny Clarke's home with two friends.

According to media reports, Mrs Clark suffered burns to 30 per cent of her body trying to save the children.

Jesse said he cried when his grandmother told him his friends were gone.

"I feel sad," Jesse said.

"And I felt a bit guilty.

Jesse said his mum was donating \$200 to the fundraising effort.

Maranatha Christian College raised nearly \$2500 for the Bushfire Appeal.

To donate visit [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au), phone 1800 811 700, or go to any NAB, ANZ, Westpac, BankWest or Commonwealth bank branch.

For direct deposits to the Victorian Bushfire Relief Fund use BSB 082001 and account number 860 046 797.