

Media Release

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COLES REGIONAL MANAGER JOHN APPLEBY WINS BIG HEART AWARD

Coles Regional Manager John Appleby has been named winner of the Business Council of Australia's Big Heart award, for his efforts in protecting the Batemans Bay community during the January 2020 bushfires. Mr Appleby also received the People's Choice award, voted by members of the community for each category.

In its inaugural Biggies Awards, the BCA presented the Big Heart award to an individual who went to extraordinary lengths to help those in need, often while facing their own challenges.

As bushfires devastated the NSW South Coast communities of Batemans Bay, Bega and Eden, John led a 120-strong group of Coles team members, who worked tirelessly to provide supplies and fresh food to first responders and local residents.

Road closures and power outages meant Coles Batemans Bay was the only major supermarket in the area that continued to operate during the peak of the bushfires, with John and the store team serving over 4,500 customers in just one day.

Under John's leadership, the Batemans Bay store acted as a safe haven for families who had lost their homes, and kept thousands of local residents, emergency personnel and stranded tourists supplied with food and other essentials.

John said he was grateful for the incredible efforts the store team had made to help the community through the bushfires, as well as the support of the entire Coles business.

"The dedication shown by the team in store was simply inspiring – some of them had lost their own homes in the fires, but still kept coming to work because they wanted to help the thousands of people who were relying on us," he said.

"We also had constant support from the supply chain team, who worked with emergency services to ensure we could get replenishment orders through the roadblocks, management who gave us a green light to make necessary donations of supplies to the community and emergency services, and team members from all over Sydney who jumped on a bus to come down and give us a hand so the store team could have a break.

"That spirit of collaboration is part of who we are at Coles, but it's in times like this that it really comes to the fore – I feel very fortunate to work with such a dedicated team and this award is really for all of them."

Coles Chief Executive Officer Steven Cain said John's actions were a true reflection of how all Coles team members embody its purpose to sustainably feed all Australians to help them lead healthier and happier lives.

"John went above and beyond, ensuring our emergency services, volunteers and evacuees could get the food and supplies they needed, as well as helping our customers feel safe and calm in our Batemans Bay store," he said.

"I am incredibly proud of how John demonstrated our values of passion and pace and responsibility in supporting his team and the wider Batemans Bay community in a time of great need."

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