



Bushfire response resource pack

A resource pack for educators, families and community members to help manage the mental health impact of Australian bushfires.

Updated: 27 January 2023

What is the purpose of the resource pack?

Bushfires have a profound impact on Australia. Many schools and early learning services are damaged or destroyed, and many more children, young people and their families have been – and will continue to be – affected by this crisis.

While the physical impact of bushfire is obvious, the mental health impact may not be, and will be experienced differently by people.

Knowing how to look after yourself, and others, is especially important for coping and recovery.

Recovery will be different for each community, depending on the extent of the impact, and the needs of each community may change over time.

Be You has developed a resource pack for schools and early learning services affected by bushfires. The resource pack focuses on providing information related to mental health and wellbeing for learning communities.

Who is the resource pack for?

This resource pack has been developed with educators in mind, and includes information for parents, families, children, young people and community members.

There is a lot of information online about how to cope with the trauma and the mental health impact of an event such as bushfires.

This resource pack has been compiled to offer educators high-quality information that may be useful for providing support, responding to the needs of everyone in your learning community, and practising self-care.

How do I use the resource pack?

We know that communities and individuals are experiencing different stages of bushfire crisis at any given time. Therefore, the pack includes resources for different stages of response and recovery.

The resource pack is divided into five sections:

- [Preparedness](#): Information for those who want to ensure they are prepared for upcoming bushfire season.
- [Immediate support](#): Information about how to deal with and manage distress in the immediate days and weeks after the event.
- [Resources for educators supporting children and young people](#): Information for educators on how to manage the impact of bushfires, with a focus on self-care and strategies to support recovery.
- [Resources for families and communities](#): Information for families, parents, caregivers and community members on how to manage the short- and longer-term impacts of bushfires.
- [Educator wellbeing](#): Information about self-care and wellbeing for educators.

This resource pack is not a clinical guide to providing mental health interventions to children, young people and their families. Instead, it's a quick reference guide for those looking for information about what you can do to help support your learning community.

For more information about clinical services available to the community, visit the Department of Health's [bushfires and floods](#) page.

Looking after yourself when accessing these resources

We have taken care to include resources from reputable organisations. Please be mindful when accessing the links that they may contain information that could be distressing. If you need immediate crisis support, you can call one of the numbers listed below.

Crisis support information

For immediate crisis support, the following services are available:

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800
- **Beyond Blue Support Service:** 1300 22 4636

Preparedness

These resources provide information about preparedness and include information about how educators and families can practically and psychologically prepare children for bushfire season.

[Australian bushfires 2020: Psychological preparation and recovery](#)

Author: Australian Psychological Society

Who is it for: Community members, families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This series of information sheets guides the community and families on a range of topics, from preparing for bushfires and psychological first aid to looking after children affected by bushfires and developing useful skills for recovery.

[Bushfire preparedness for your family](#)

Author: Trauma and Grief Network (Australian Government, ANU and ACATLG Network)

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This two-page PDF outlines ways for families to prepare for a bushfire. It includes tip for both practical and psychological preparedness.

[Disaster preparedness, myths and programs that hold promise](#)

Author: Emerging Minds

Who is it for: Early childhood educators and primary school teachers

Brief overview: This 17-minute podcast talks about the benefits of involving children in disaster preparedness, as well as some of the myths and misconceptions that children hold about bushfires.

[How educators can prepare their students for a natural disaster](#)

Author: Emerging Minds

Who is it for: Early childhood educators and primary school teachers

Brief overview: This resource provides advice for educators on how to prepare themselves and their classrooms for a possible natural disaster by using both practical and psychological strategies, including tips on how to talk to children about the potential threat of a disaster.

[How parents and caregivers can prepare for a natural disaster](#)

Author: Emerging Minds

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This resource provides advice for families on how to prepare themselves and their children for a possible natural disaster, including tips on how to talk to children about the potential threat of a disaster and how to involve children in disaster preparedness.

[Preparing for emergencies](#)

Author: Australian Red Cross

Who is it for: Community members

Brief overview: This webpage offers tips and resources to prepare families for emergencies, including how to create an emergency plan, a Get Prepared disaster preparedness app, and links to helpful resources for before, during and after an emergency.

[Preparing learning communities for the bushfire season](#)

Author: Be You Bushfire Response Program

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This webinar hosted by the Be You Bushfire Response Program with a panel of experts covers the importance of bushfire preparedness, tips on how to involve children and young people in preparedness and a Q&A session to give educators practical strategies.

[Preparing your family for natural disaster](#)

Author: Emerging Minds

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This three-minute video offers practical tips for families when preparing for a natural disaster, including simple and practical things they can do to protect children.

[Resources for teachers – RediPlan preparedness program](#)

Author: Australian Red Cross

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: These lesson plans are part of RediPlan's free preparedness resources that support educators to help children prepare for emergencies. The lesson plans can be mapped to the Australian Curriculum.

- [Early childhood](#)
- [Years 1-3](#)
- [Years 4-6](#)
- [Years 7-9](#)
- [Years 10-12](#)

Immediate support

The following resources provide information which may be useful in the immediate aftermath of a bushfire. They include information about managing distress, looking after yourself, and talking to children and young people about bushfires.

[Advice to assist parents, teachers and students following recent fires](#)

Author: New South Wales Department of Education

Who is it for: Primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This website features a video with advice on supporting children and young people through a bushfire crisis.

[Bushfire Social Story](#)

Author: Early Connections. A collaborative network of five not-for-profit community-based organisations on the Mid North Coast (NSW).

Who is it for: Children and young people

Brief overview: This downloadable document is a social story for supporting educators and families to engage in a conversation about bushfires with children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

[Community Trauma Toolkit](#)

Author: Emerging Minds, The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (Australian Government)

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: Emerging Minds' Community Trauma Toolkit includes over 200 resources about trauma. The Community Trauma Toolkit is endorsed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) and is suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences.

[How educators can help in the classroom following a traumatic event](#)

Author: Emerging Minds, The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (Australian Government)

Who is it for: Primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This fact sheet includes advice on strategies and practices educators can implement to support children and young people in the classroom following a traumatic event.

[Looking after yourself and your family](#)

Author: Australian Red Cross

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This resource provides advice on taking care of yourself and providing support for others following distressing events. There are resources for parents, families and caregivers in Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Nepali and Swahili.

[Psychological First Aid: A guide to supporting people affected by disaster](#)

Author: Australian Red Cross

Who is it for: Community members

Brief overview: This psychological first aid guide is for people working in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. It provides an overview of best practice in psychological first aid following disasters and traumatic events.

[Talking to children about what is happening in Australia](#)

Author: The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This website includes a video that discusses the signs of trauma in children and young people, along with a list of the ways in which families can help their children.

Resources for educators supporting children and young people

The following resources provide information which may be useful in both the short- and longer-term after a bushfire, when children and young people who may have been directly or indirectly affected by the bushfire have returned to schools and early learning services.

[Be You educator wellbeing tools](#)

Author: Be You

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: A selection of tools and resources that can help educators to reflect on their stressors, promote help-seeking behaviour and plan how to support their own wellbeing.

[Be You Fact Sheets: Grief, trauma and critical incidents](#)

Author: Be You

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This is a set of five fact sheets covering different topics including: Grief, Supporting children and young people affected by grief, Trauma, How trauma affects children and young people, and Supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma.

[Birdie's Tree](#)

Author: Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health. Queensland Health.

Who is it for: Preschool and primary-school-age children

Brief overview: This series of resources, including books and online games, can be used to support children to work through their responses to scary situations. The resources include a storybook titled *Birdie and the fire*.

[Bushfire Toolkit – Renewing lives affected by bushfire](#)

Author: Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This downloadable toolkit contains resources for educators supporting children and young people after bushfire, a guide to help children heal after a crisis and other resources on the impacts of trauma and strategies to support recovery. To access the resources, you'll have to provide a name and email address.

[Case examples of trauma reactions in young people](#)

Author: Australian National University

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This series of case studies helps educators understand and recognise what trauma might look like in children and young people. Learning communities could use these in professional learning sessions for educators or in communication from leadership discussing that trauma may present on different ways.

[Educators resource pack: Supporting children after bushfires](#)

Author: Emerging Minds. The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health (Australian Government)

Who is it for: Early childhood educators and primary school teachers

Brief overview: This selection of resources helps educators support students after the bushfires. It contains evidence-based videos, tips about what to expect in an education setting, and information about common signs of trauma in children of different developmental stages.

In the classroom:

- [How educators can help in the classroom](#)
- [Australian bushfires: Student wellbeing and support for teachers \(AIDR co-authored resource\)](#)
- [Re-establishing routines and rules following a disaster or traumatic event \(video\)](#)
- [Trauma sensitive behaviour management](#)

About students:

- [Psychological First Aid tip card](#)
- Psychological reactions to trauma videos by age and stage:
 - [Age 0-12 months](#)
 - [Age 2-4 years](#)
 - [Age 5-12 years](#)
- Psychological reactions to trauma fact sheets by age and stage:
 - [Age 0-12 months](#)
 - [Age 2-4 years](#)
 - [Age 5-12 years](#)

For parents:

- [10 ways to support your child during the bushfire season](#)
 - [Self-care plan \(completed with examples\)](#)
 - [Self-care plan \(blank\)](#)
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[The impact of trauma on mental health](#)

Author: headspace

Who is it for: Young people

Brief overview: This webpage for young people explains that trauma impacts people differently. The page outlines different types of trauma, responses to trauma and advice on help seeking.

[Resources for teachers: School recovery tool kit](#)

Author: Australian National University

Who is it for: Primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This PDF from the Australian National University was created following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. Page 6 includes 10 tips for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom. It also includes a broad range of topics from educator self-care to behaviours common to children and young people who have experienced trauma.

[Strathewen community: A bushfire recovery story 10 years in the making](#)

Author: Emerging Minds

Who is it for: Early childhood educators, primary and secondary school teachers

Brief overview: This 30-minute video follows the story of Strathewen Primary School and their recovery following the bushfire in their community in 2009. The video discusses themes that may be challenging, such as loss of life and the impacts of the bushfire on children in the community.

Resources for families and communities

These resources provide information about support and advice in the months after a bushfire – when the physical impact may no longer be as visible, but communities are still recovering.

Disaster news and distressing news events

Author: raisingchildren.net.au

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This webpage outlines how media coverage can affect young children, how to limit exposure and talking to young children about disaster news.

Supporting:

- [Children 2-5 years](#)
 - [Children 6-11 years](#)
 - [Teenagers](#)
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[Getting through bushfires, drought and extreme climate events](#)

Author: Lifeline Australia

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: A self-help toolkit with strategies to help families dealing with the stress of bushfires, drought and natural disasters.

[Recovering after a bushfire](#)

Author: Lifeline Australia

Who is it for: Community members, families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This webpage provides tips to support communities, individuals and families to cope with the aftermath of bushfires. It includes a self-help resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people coping with grief and loss.

[Recovering together after a natural disaster – fire](#)

Author: Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This information sheet helps families identify when babies and young children are distressed by what is happening in the world around them. It offers tips, strategies and activities for supporting young children, and includes a short story to read and talk about.

[Supporting a young person after a natural disaster](#)

Author: headspace

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This webpage is a resource for families and friends supporting children and young people after a natural disaster.

[Trauma: First response to help children](#)

Author: Raising Children Network

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This website provides information for families on ways to identify signs of trauma, as well as guidelines for their response. This resource supports children and young people between the ages of 3 and 15.

[Understanding and managing anniversary reactions: Tips for families affected by natural disasters](#)

Author: Trauma and Grief Network

Who is it for: Families, parents and caregivers

Brief overview: This tip sheet supports families in the lead up to the anniversary of a natural disaster event. It includes information about understanding how children and young people may respond during the anniversary period, and prompts for conversations about the anniversary.