

Bushfire Response Program

*A roadmap to
recovery following
a bushfire*



With delivery partners



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Be You Bushfire Response Program webinar handout

Included below are reflective questions referred to during the webinar along with links to additional information, resources and references.

Links to resources

Please find below a selection of resources either shared during the webinar or used in preparation for the webinar.

Be You resources

- Be You Wellbeing Tools for You (educators):
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/wellbeing-tools-for-you>
- Wellbeing Fact Sheet:
<https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/wellbeing>
- Be You Event:
<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/events>
- Be You Bushfire Response Program:
<https://beyou.edu.au/bushfire-response-program>
- Be You Bushfire Response Resource Pack:
<https://beyou.edu.au/bushfire-response-program>

Emerging Minds resources

- Emerging Minds Community Trauma Toolkit:
<https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit/>
- Emerging Minds and Beyond Blue e-learning suite: supporting children in early learning, primary and secondary school following a disaster or community trauma
<https://emergingminds.com.au/>

Other resources

- 10 Years Beyond Bushfires Study:

https://mbspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3645090/BB-10-years-report_spread.pdf

- Appraise Tool:

https://mbspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3525022/Appraise-report_combined.pdf

- Make Space for Learning:

<https://australianchildhoodfoundation.crackerhq.com/pvl/9b20e31a6fa3c43f414af2fcb00f1a52/pdf/68027be0-b83e-497e-b1a9-1a91ce27ad22>

- Red Cross Publications:

<https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/a924521e-236a-4c16-9755-a37336ee4dca/19060-RED-Crisis-Children-Booklet-D11-176x250-Web.pdf.aspx>

<https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/bd0dacb7-f46b-45c8-8031-d045d0c1ee29/19060-RED-Crisis-Parents-Booklet-D10-Web.pdf.aspx>

- Birdie's Tree:

<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>

Attendee question and answer responses

Q. What are some of the signs you will see to let you know that the students are recovering from the bushfire especially in classroom work and participation?

I think this is a bit tricky to answer. Some students won't actually show signs of experiencing difficulties for quite some time. That's why it's really important to ensure that future teachers are aware of students who have experienced a traumatic event and can then better understand any concerning behaviours.

I think some of the signs of recovery might be:

- The ability to cope more easily with triggers: for some of our students, triggers were wind, stormy weather and power outages as well as anniversaries
- The ability to maintain focus and retain concepts taught over a period of time (especially in Maths)
- Improved sleep patterns
- Fewer indications of attachment issues

Janette Cook, AM. Personal experience of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires

Q. Any advice for creating consistency in a remote school context which has high staff turnover?

This is a really difficult situation. Sometimes remote schools are in 'hard to staff' areas – and yes – I believe that consistency of message and personnel working with the school communities is really important. No-one wants to keep reporting their 'story' to a variety of people, it creates a feeling of not being heard and having to re-live the experience. Neither of these situations are helpful. Building trusting relationships is really important.

'Induction' of new staff will be important in your situation – and I know that can be time consuming – but beneficial. It will be important for new staff to understand the experiences of the students they will be working with.

Some 'ongoing' documentation to this end could also help, (including any support services being accessed and successful, or not, strategies that have been used with each student). This could also be used if students transfer to another setting at short notice, which sometimes happened in our setting.

Perhaps regular whole-staff update sessions would be help with consistency of information in relation to student wellbeing.

We were fortunate to be able to access the services of some retired staff who lived in the area and had similar experiences of the 'event' to our students, staff and families.

Janette Cook, AM. Personal experience of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires

Q. How do the students deal with the loss of a classmate/s as well as the bushfire?

The context of the loss is important. Are we speaking about a traumatic death related to the fires or a friend moving schools? Students deal with loss related to death according to their relationship, developmental level and understanding of what happened. Being able to memorialise and remember the relationship are important factors. The grief can be for the loss of the person and the meaning they held for you in the relationship. ACGB has great resources and training.

Michelle Roberts MAPS. Director, Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network, Australian National University

Q. Why is support so short term? (2 years?)

There are usually different forms of support being provided, funded from different sources. Some services and supports will be coming from existing programs and organisations and others will be established specifically in the wake of the disaster. There is usually an initial estimation for how much is needed and for how long but this tends to be adjusted over time, based on actual needs and availability of resources. Ideally, there should be a gradual transition plan for return to local services over time. Our research is increasing understanding of the long tail of recovery and the need to allow for this in service planning. Our 10 years Beyond Bushfires Report recommends a 5 year recovery plan following a major disaster.

Lisa Gibbs, Professor and Director of Child and Community Wellbeing Unit, University of Melbourne