

CAPACITY, CONNECTION, SUPPORT: BLUE MOUNTAINS & BELL LINE RECOVERY

Red Cross Resources

Red Cross Recovery Programs and Resources

Personal Support Outreach

The International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent defines Personal Support as the provision of information, practical assistance, emotional support, assessment of immediate impact for the individual, assessment of immediate needs and referral to other support agencies and services as required.

Personal Support Outreach is an important validation of the experience that individuals and communities have had with the Bushfires. These services are usually delivered by a team of trained volunteers who visit people in the community in their homes or businesses to informally discuss their needs and provide support.

Communicating in Recovery Training

Communicating in Recovery is a best-practice guide for people or organisations managing information in a post-emergency environment. The guide was developed in direct response to community and agency concerns following the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The training is a module-based two-day workshop, which covers recovery communications, feedback loops, identifying audiences, prioritising messages, communication methods and the media. The training is for anyone working in the recovery or emergency services sector who currently manages (or will manage) information after an emergency.

The aim of the training is to:

- assist people to communicate more effectively after an emergency;
- raise awareness of recovery communications; and
- provide an opportunity for people working in recovery to network and share ideas.

Community Recovery Information Series

The Community Recovery Information Series (CRIS) aims to support community leaders to understand the context in which they are operating (e.g. the role of government and other service providers) and utilise the skills within their community to manage their own recovery. The Series consists of the following modules:

- Recovery 101 which aims to help explain the recovery process through the provision of information, tools and the sharing of stories from other emergency affected communities.
- Self Care aims to provide participants with information and training so that emergency affected communities are able to identify and act on the potentially negative psychosocial effects of the emergency and the recovery phase in order to feel secure and value their lives.
- Communicating in Recovery, is a shortened version of the 2 day training course, and outlines how to successfully communicate with communities following an emergency so that community leaders can successfully impart information and knowledge about recovery to their communities and build communities connectedness following an emergency.
- Harnessing Goodwill identifies resources and shares experiences from other emergency affected communities about dealing with donations and goodwill after an emergency.

These modules aim to provide those in emergency affected communities, in particular community leaders, with the information necessary to take an active role in their recovery and engage others in the process also. Consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including community leaders from emergency effected communities, has been undertaken to inform the content of each module. Each module has a suite of supporting resources.

Psychological First Aid training

Provision of psychological first aid after emergencies has been shown to strengthen people's capacity to recover by helping them to identify their immediate needs, and their own strengths and abilities to meet those needs. In line with best practice, Red Cross has developed a Psychological First Aid training course that will become part of a suite of basic training for Red Cross Emergency Services volunteers. The training aims to provide Emergency Services volunteers with the skills to provide basic emotional support and psychological first aid to people affected by disasters in Australia. If appropriate, Red Cross can also train up staff from local organisations and agencies who may be providing psychosocial support to people affected by the bushfires.

Disaster Recovery Support Groups

Red Cross and the Australian Psychological Society have had a formal partnership since 2009. To date APS has provided support to Red Cross during activations, observing and debriefing volunteers. Red Cross has identified that a support group service would be beneficial for individuals in some communities following emergencies to enable them to share their experiences. APS has the expertise and the member base required to facilitate support groups and Red Cross has the community networks and logistical experience required to implement a support group service. Red Cross successfully co-facilitated a Bushfire Bereavement Support group in Victoria for three years after the Black Saturday Fires in 2009.

After the Emergency Website

The After the Emergency Website is a youth recovery resource with an 'all hazards' approach. As a result, it is applicable for young people who have experienced a range of emergencies.

The website features:

- stories from young people who have experienced an emergency
- the recovery audio files that are available on the MP3 player
- information from experts to support young people
- messages from musicians and celebrities
- information about what young people can expect during their recovery and
- information about helping others.

It also includes resources for teachers and links to other sites that have related information and recovery-related messaging. The website is continually updated by Red Cross staff and a team of volunteers to keep the content relevant and up to date.

The website can be found at www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency.

Recovery playlist

Red Cross has worked with Australia's only national youth radio broadcaster, Triple J, to record an audio playlist that was launched in November 2012 and is now available online to download for free. The playlist includes music from Triple J's Unearthed artist pool. Unearthed is an initiative for discovering independent and unsigned artists.

The audio playlist has music, recovery information, messages of support and advice about trauma recovery. The 'recovery tracks' are 2 to 4 minute tracks on a specific topic relating to recovery recorded by an expert, including:

- relationships, by Relationships Australia
- looking after pets, by the RSPCA
- accessing professional mental health, by Kidshelpline
- impacts of natural disasters on the natural environment, by Landcare
- the brain and crisis, Dr Karl
- mindfulness and relaxation, by Dr Craig Hassed.

The target age group for the updated audio playlist is young people aged around 14-18 years; the playlist can be downloaded from the internet to their phones, iPods or MP3 players. Our communication to young people about the playlist focus on encouraging young people to share the playlist, via channels familiar to them, as a way of empowering them to initiate their own recovery.

The playlist can be downloaded, for free, from <http://aftertheemergency.redcross.org.au/get-info/support-organisations/mp3s>

Helping children and young people cope with crisis

Helping children and young people cope with crisis is a guide for parents and caregivers, developed over two years after the 2009 Victorian Bushfires in consultation with community groups, experts and young people. It was launched in 2011. This resource won the International Association of Emergency Managers 2011 Global Public Awareness award. It is designed for those affected by any type of crisis including parents or carers of children, teachers, youth workers and health professionals. It helps carers identify symptoms of trauma and how trauma affects children. Encouraging and empowering parents and carers, this guide provides practical suggestions to reduce and prevent trauma, and tips on self-care.

Emergency Recovery Lesson Plans

The lesson plans were designed to assist children to reflect on the impact of the emergency and be aware of the feelings they may have after an emergency. The content of the plans were developed by teachers with advice and support from experienced emergency managers and a psychologist experienced in emergency recovery.

The lessons plans include five different units, each targeting different school year classes:

- Emergency Recovery Early Childhood, for ages 3-5
- Emergency Recovery Years 1–3, for ages 6-8
- Emergency Recovery Years 4-6, for ages 9-12
- Emergency Recovery Years 7-9, for ages 13-15
- Emergency Recovery Years 10-12, for ages 16-18.

The purpose of the units is to provide opportunities for young children to understand that:

- change is a natural part of life,
- change can be dramatic and unexpected, even traumatic,
- people can adapt to, and recover from, change.