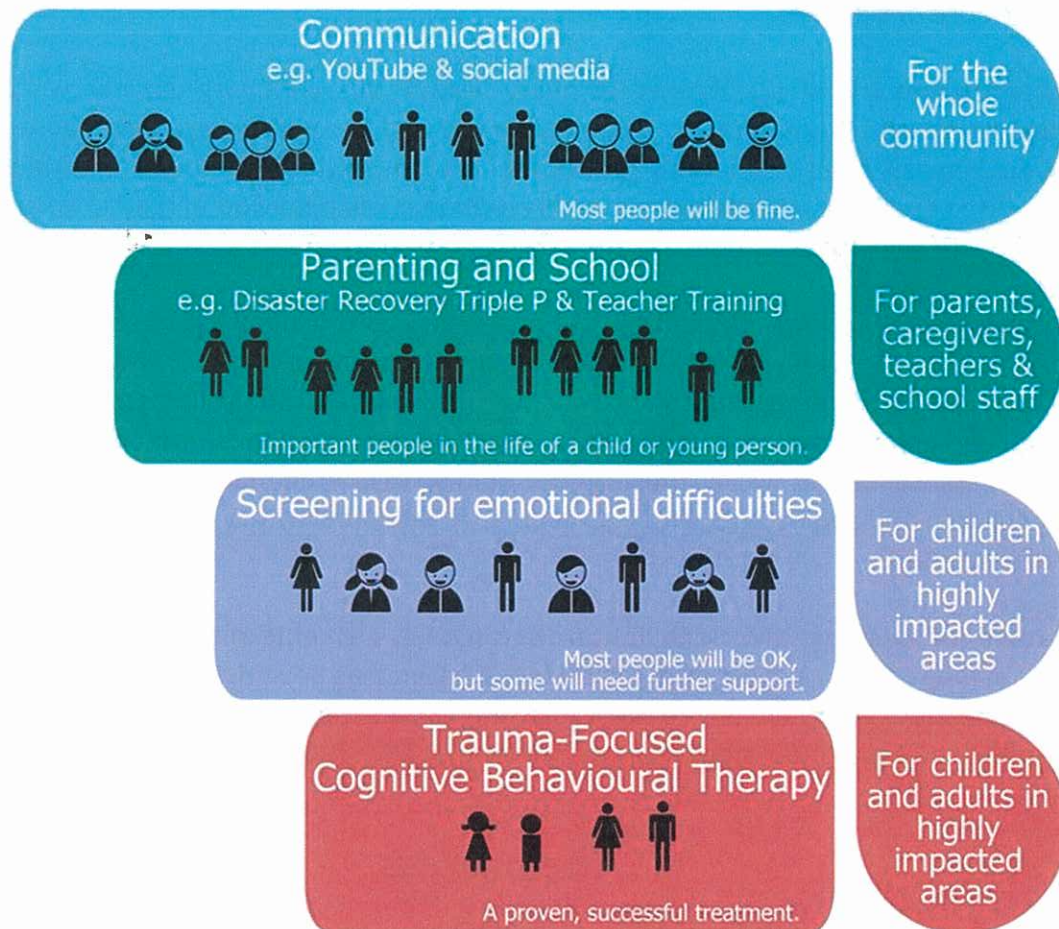


NSW Children's Bushfire Disaster Response

Promoting recovery into the medium and longer-term



Elements of the stepped-care model of service provision

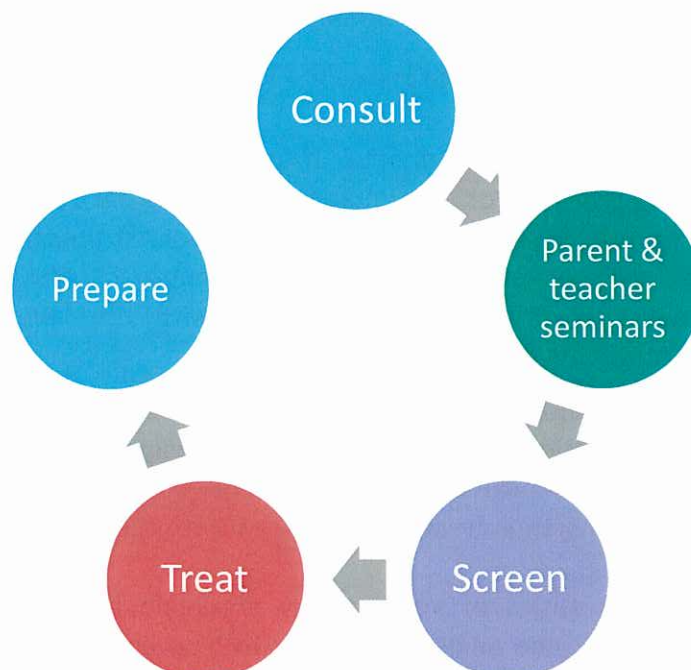
Australian and international experience has consistently shown that some children and adolescents are at risk for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, chronic depression and anxiety following any form of natural disaster. In highly impacted areas, as many as 30% of children may benefit from extra assistance. A stepped-care approach provides something (in this case, emotional recovery information) for everyone, with the level of intervention gradually becoming more intense as the need increases.

The model proposed (and trialled successfully in Tasmania) involves overarching direction of the response by professionals with experience and expertise in the area of children's post-disaster mental health. Local clinicians will receive training and supervision in order to implement interventions, thus creating a vital legacy for the future.

- **Communication:** A series of vodcasts are available that discuss Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and anxiety; and how to help children cope with emotional stress. A second series of vodcasts and a Triple P tip sheet on the important topic of Preparedness are also available for parents and teachers to use in helping children feel emotionally prepared and resilient in the lead up to the next bushfire season, as well as the anniversary of the event. For each aspect of the response detailed below, consent is obtained from relevant stakeholders.

- **Parenting and School: (1) Teacher Training Package:** This training package up-skills teachers in recognising traumatic stress reactions in children, provides classroom behaviour tips and highlights potential referral pathways for children and adolescents. It should be noted that there is no intention to turn teachers into therapists. Indeed, the package emphasises the importance of self-care.
- **Parenting and School: (2) Disaster Recovery Triple P:** This parenting seminar, written in conjunction with Professor Matt Sanders provides parents with information about what to expect in terms of emotional and behavioural reactions. Other key content includes: answering questions, managing children’s emotional and behavioural reactions; and when and how to seek further help.
- **Screening for Emotional difficulties:** Our experience across many natural disasters shows that: (1) surprisingly few people present for psychological assistance following a natural disaster; and (2) offering proactive screening of children and adolescents with a simple pencil and paper questionnaire is a quick means of identifying those who may benefit from further assistance – as well as those who should be reassured that they are recovering well. For children and adolescents with high scores, an interview with a trained clinician is recommended.
- **Trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy:** Key elements of this very successful 10-session intervention include that it is evidence-based, has been developed specifically for young people, relates directly to the frightening events they experienced, features strong parent involvement and is delivered one on one, in the school setting.

The process



COSTINGS : As we don’t know how many schools and students were affected by the bushfires it is hard to put forward a realistic costing for this proposal . The Tasmanian project will cost approximately \$600,000 which was funded by the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal and *beyondblue*.

Tasmanian Experience

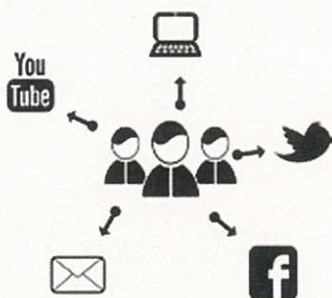
beyondblue Child and Adolescent Bushfire Response

After a traumatic event - like a bushfire - it's natural for children and teenagers to feel scared, anxious and sad. This response has worked with the communities in the Tasmanian Peninsula to support their children and help them get back to their emotional best.

The response so far

- 7 Parent and community seminars
- 60 Teachers trained to identify and support post-disaster distress
- 17 Schools offered screening and treatment

Communication via:

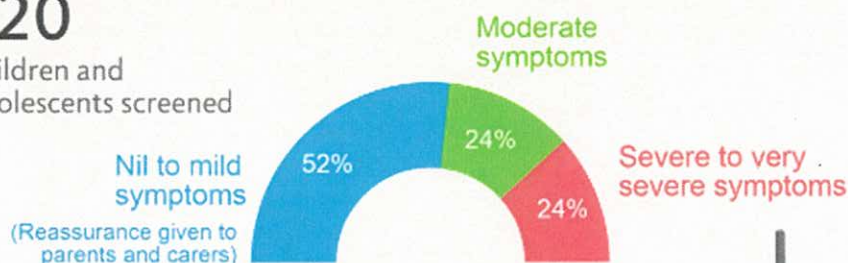


Over **300** stakeholders including:

- Schools
- Clinicians
- Government
- Parents
- Health workers
- Local councils

Screening for PTSD

220 children and adolescents screened



53%

Of those with severe to very severe symptoms (n=55) and persistent moderate symptoms (n=5) who consented to a diagnostic interview...

met criteria for PTSD and were offered the trauma-focused CBT treatment.

Insomnia
Nightmares
Irritable

Regression
Depression
Anxiety
Flashbacks
Hyperarousal
Clingy

27 Children and adolescents have started treatment

Treatment is taking place at

5 schools throughout the Peninsular and Hobart

9 Clinicians are implementing the treatment

