

November - December 2020



## NEWSLETTER

### ANNIVERSARIES

Well here we are, approaching the anniversary of a year since the fires of late 2019, early 2020. We are wondering how you're travelling with it all now?

Integration can be a Step By Step process, it can feel at times like we're moving forward quickly, and at other times slowly or even backwards.

Our team have been walking alongside many of you, supporting with some practical, some emotional recovery steps – we are here to support you with this longer-term recovery process, and we know the journey is unique to each person.

We're curious to know how you are looking after yourself at this time. We are hearing that many people are feeling fatigued. When we are stressed over long periods of time, our bodies become tired with elevated cortisol levels – the hormone that we release when we need to keep going through challenging times.

So it's really important to rest and take time for self-care. And to find ways to reflect and acknowledge where you've come from and where you are now.

There are people available to talk things through with, people who don't judge and who understand about the experience of recovering from a disaster. Sometimes we can be caught off guard when an anniversary brings up feelings or memories of experiences we think we *should* have moved on from. It can help to know you're not alone with those feelings.

It's really okay to not be okay sometimes. Recovery can be a longer process than we expect. Dr Rob Gordon explains about anniversaries for significant events: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmju\\_D54F\\_A&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmju_D54F_A&feature=youtu.be)



### LOCAL SUPPORT

**Rural Adversity Mental Health Program** Sonia 0448 125 676  
[sonia.cox@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sonia.cox@health.nsw.gov.au)

**Headspace Bushfire Recovery Team:** youth wellbeing & care coordination - Blue Mountains: Charley 0438 871 120  
[charley.mason@parramattamission.org.au](mailto:charley.mason@parramattamission.org.au) Hawkesbury: Simone 4720 8850  
[simone.thorne@parramattamission.org.au](mailto:simone.thorne@parramattamission.org.au)

**NSW Health Bushfire & Covid 19 Trauma Recovery Team:** supporting emotional wellbeing. Hawkesbury: Vanessa 0429 011 134  
[Vanessa.Brunker@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Vanessa.Brunker@health.nsw.gov.au) Blue Mountains: Beaver 0427 309 823  
[Beaver.Hudson@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Beaver.Hudson@health.nsw.gov.au)

**Free Counselling & Mediation** Individuals, couples, families 1800 864 846  
[ask@uniting.org](mailto:ask@uniting.org)

**Rural Financial Counselling Service NSW - Bushfire Recovery** Contact Dev 1800 940 404 or [ceo@rfcscr.com.au](mailto:ceo@rfcscr.com.au)

**Lifeline Central West Financial Counselling:** Free access to legal help Kylie 0490 350 885  
[kholford@lifelinecentralwest.org.au](mailto:kholford@lifelinecentralwest.org.au)

### CONTACT US:

[stepbystep@gatewayfamily.org.au](mailto:stepbystep@gatewayfamily.org.au)

0417 298 832

[facebook.com/Step-by-Step-Recovery-Support-Service](https://facebook.com/Step-by-Step-Recovery-Support-Service)

## A PERSONAL STORY OF RECOVERY

Like so many families in our region, Leam Dzwinek and his two children had bushfires impact their property at the end of last year. While Leam and a friend managed to save the house, his surrounding property was burnt, and he lost many of his much loved animals.

For Leam there have been a variety of challenges on the recovery journey. He found it took time to work through the experience of having stayed to fight the fire. The bushfires and then the effects of Covid have also taken a toll on his plumbing business. And the burnt land has meant the immediate loss of the rural lifestyle he and his children enjoyed.

Ruth Myers from Step By Step has been in touch with Leam since earlier this year. "When I first met Leam he said he was "okay" but I was aware that he may be feeling overwhelmed with the 'what to do's'," said Ruth. "What to do first, how to start, and the financial processes. I met with him and had a good yarn, and over time I could just check in on him; meeting him at a coffee shop, or in the office, or at his home."

Leam says Ruth told him about some available grants and helped him to apply for them. She has stayed in contact and supported him by letting him know what services and financial support is available.

Leam was able to receive a small business grant from the NSW Government and he has also received help from the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. "Thankfully, I had a great number of friends who helped out. The financial support helped get some things started," said Leam.

Approaching the one year anniversary of the fires, Leam has been planting flowers and shrubs to bring some colour back to his garden. With the risk of fires much lower this year, Leam says he feels safe. He is looking forward to creating some new play spaces for his children, and after an initial lull he's getting his business back up and running. He is looking forward to a family Christmas, doing some rebuilding and enjoying time with his children.

I'm really grateful for Leam's sense of community and sense of moving forward. In a word, he lives resilience," said Ruth.



### GRANTS & ASSISTANCE

**NSW Primary Producers Special Disaster Grant**  
\$75,000 extended until December 15 2020  
[www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au)

**Red Cross Primary Residence Rebuild & Repair Grants** extended to 31 December 2020  
1800 733 276  
[www.redcross.org.au/grants](http://www.redcross.org.au/grants)

**NSW Small Business Grants**  
Up to \$50,000 available if your business has been directly affected by bush fire. There are also \$10,000 loans available Call 13 77 88

Register at Service NSW for Block Cleanup  
[www.apply.service.nsw.gov.au/bushfire-cleanup](http://www.apply.service.nsw.gov.au/bushfire-cleanup) or call 13 77 88

**Disaster Assistance Finder**  
<https://disasterassistance.service.nsw.gov.au/>

### CONTACT US:

✉ [stepbystep@gatewayfamily-services.org.au](mailto:stepbystep@gatewayfamily-services.org.au)

☎ 0417 298 832

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