

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Helping children and adolescents overcome emotional problems in the wake of the bushfires is one of the most important aspects of their healing.

The suggestions below have been developed to assist you with planning for response/recovery. The number of people that make up the crisis management team will vary according to the resources available.

Principals can work with their crisis management team to determine appropriate courses of action:

- during the emergency
- in the immediate short-term
- in the medium-term (days/weeks following)
- in the long-term (this will differ for individuals).

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Coordinator

The principal usually coordinates the response/recovery activities within the school. The principal makes decisions based on a number of factors including advice from regional and central staff, and information and suggestions from members of the crisis management team.

Student information

The student information team member is responsible for ensuring teachers have an accurate account of students and for coordinating the

efforts in accounting for missing and/or extra students.

Buses and transport

The transport team member is responsible for liaison with appropriate emergency services personnel that may affect transportation of children and adolescents to and from school. Planned pick-up and drop-off points need to be identified for parents. Contact with emergency services such as local police and CFA should be maintained during the coming weeks.

Parent liaison

The parent liaison team member needs to organise a meeting place for parents. In addition, the team member can network and provide support for parents via information, communication and support.

Media liaison

The media will possibly contact schools in the fire-affected areas. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has a Media Unit that is to be contacted for support if there are any media enquiries at the school. The Media Unit will give advice on how to manage any enquiries. An important task required of the media liaison person is to protect children and adolescents at school from media exposure. The media liaison team member can prepare any information/newsletters/letters to parents that the principal requests.

Communications

The communications team member is responsible for any updates about the bushfires that are relevant to the school. In addition, this team member can provide information about resources that are required and/or received.

Staff

Staff play a vital role in assisting and supporting children and adolescents to overcome emotional problems. Staff will be supported by the principal in identifying, first, the staff's immediate needs and then those of the children they are supporting.

School counsellors

Psychologists and social workers can provide early intervention strategies to assist staff in supporting children and adolescents. These team members are highly skilled and will also provide critical information for teachers and parents about how to help children who are traumatised as a result of the bushfires. School counsellors will assess the needs of teachers and students. They will work with teachers and students to minimise the impact of the trauma. Some children, adolescents and teachers may need to be assisted with referral to external mental health professionals.

