

# Supporting recovery for young people

For adolescents

The 2009 Victorian bushfires have had an impact on many people across Victoria, whether they were directly affected by the loss of family, friends, property or community or indirectly affected by the news of affected family or friends. Young people experience things differently to adults, and can respond to traumatic events like bushfires in many different ways.

Your parents, teachers, school staff and other adult family members play a big role in helping you when you're feeling down, angry, upset or confused and can be a good source of information and advice. Sometimes you might not feel like talking to your parents or teachers about something that's going on in your life for a variety of reasons. You might not want to 'burden' them with your thoughts or you might just find it too hard to talk to someone about how you are feeling.

If you are feeling like this there are many different ways you can get support and more information about how to work through these feelings. People such as your GP, your teachers or school welfare staff, your family's Bushfire Case Manager can support you, or you can access online or phone support services.

## When should I try and get some help dealing with things?

It is important to remember that young people have a unique response to traumatic events like the recent bushfires, or to grief and loss issues. Sometimes it's hard to cope with everything that's happening and everything you're feeling after an event like the bushfires.

Remember, there is no 'one way' that you are supposed to respond and work through your feelings such as sadness, anger, grief or loss. However, there are certain feelings and reactions you may have and it's a good idea to talk to someone about any of these, including:

- Feeling anxious, fearful or emotionally distressed
- Having a short attention span, difficulty concentrating or behaving impulsively
- Having nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Not wanting to go to school
- Feeling really angry or aggressive (towards yourself or other people)
- Having trouble getting along with your family or your friends
- Feeling that you want to hurt yourself

## What services are available near me?

There are lots of specialised support services available in bushfire affected communities, including Community Health Centres, Youth Worker Networks, drug and alcohol support services and private mental health professionals.

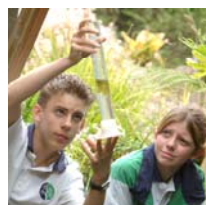
Telephone support services are also available to provide support, counselling, information and referrals, including:

- **Kids Helpline** 1800 551 800
- **Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement** 1300 664 786
- **YSAS - Youth Substance Abuse Service** (drug and alcohol support for young people aged between 12 and 21) 1800 014 446

## Community Health Centres

Community Health Centres provide a wide range of health and community support services which vary from centre to centre. To find a Community Health Centre in your local government area, including a Community Health Centre with counselling or social support services attached, visit

[http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/service\\_provider/community\\_health\\_directory.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/communityhealth/service_provider/community_health_directory.htm).



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## Youth Worker Networks

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria works with a number of Youth Worker Networks in local government areas around Victoria. You can contact Youth Worker Networks for advice, support or information about youth services in your local government area. To find out if there is a Youth Worker Network near you, visit <http://www.yacvic.org.au/sector/sector-list.chtml?title=Networks>.

## Drug and alcohol support services

Drug and alcohol support services around Victoria provide a wide variety of services including outpatient services, counselling, referrals, withdrawal programs, education programs and self help or drug users groups. To get some more information about drug and alcohol support services near you, speak to your GP, your teacher or school welfare staff, your local Community Health Centre or your Bushfire Case Manager. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone, you can search for a service online at <http://www.vicdrugguide.org.au/> or <http://www.aodservices.net.au/>.

## Getting a referral to an allied health professional

Allied health professionals are specialists who may be able to assist you if you're experiencing difficulties or having problems. They include professionals like social workers, psychologists, mental health nurses, occupational therapists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers with specific mental health qualifications.

### When might I need a referral to an allied health professional?

If you're experiencing feelings like anxiousness, aggression, depression, physical discomfort, wanting to harm yourself or having trouble with your relationships with friends or family it is a good idea to talk to a professional.

### Who can get a referral?

Anyone who has been affected by the bushfires can get a referral, but you have to have a Medicare card or be able to use your parents' Medicare card.

### What happens if I don't have a Medicare card?

If you're 15 years or over and you don't have a Medicare card you can visit a Medicare office and apply for one. If you are under the age of 15, you can't apply for a Medicare card but you can use your family Medicare card. You need to give your GP the Medicare card number and the number of your place on the card and they will use that to bulk bill you or refer you to an allied health professional.

### How do I get a referral?

Your GP or your family's Bushfire Case Manager can provide you with a referral to an allied health professional.

### What will my GP ask me?

Your GP will ask you about how you've been feeling, what's been going on at school or at home and how you're eating and sleeping. They might also ask you about things like smoking, taking drugs, drinking. You don't have to tell your GP anything you don't want to, but it's important they know as much as possible to make sure you get the right sort of support.

### Can my GP (or other health professionals) tell my parents what I've told them?

No. GPs and health professionals can't tell anyone else what you've told them, unless they have a serious concern for your safety, health or wellbeing.

### How much will it cost?

If you have been directly affected by the bushfires, you probably won't have to pay anything for any of your appointments. You should speak to your GP about any costs that might be involved, although your GP should be able to refer you to an allied health professional who won't charge you anything.

## Bushfire Psychological Counselling program

The Bushfire Psychological Counselling program provides people affected by the bushfires with up to six counselling sessions at any time over the next two years through a specially designed voucher system. You don't have to visit your GP to get these vouchers, you just need to register with your family's Bushfire Case Manager, at your local Community Hub or online. For more information on the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher program see <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal/Fund-Payments/support-payments/psychological-support-package>.