

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday, 28 November 2019

Taking care of your mental health following a bushfire

The Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) team is encouraging anyone who has been impacted by the recent bushfires to prioritise their own mental health and wellbeing as well as those around them.

RAMHP Manager Tessa Caton said people can be at an increased risk of developing anxiety and depression after a traumatic event, but help is available.

“Following on from any disaster, it is normal for people to feel overwhelmed, worry a lot more than usual, have trouble concentrating and making decisions,” said Tessa.

“It is when these feelings and emotions last more than a few weeks, or people stop doing things they’d usually be doing, is when seeking help is important. The earlier we notice a problem and find help, the better chance we have of a quick recovery and we reduce our risk of mental health problems in the future”.

Following on from a bushfire there are things you can do to take care of yourself and your mental health or the mental health of someone you know.

- spend time with family and friends
- take time out but don’t isolate yourself
- accept help when its offered
- limit the amount of media coverage you see and hear
- understand you are not alone in your experience
- write down your worries and concerns
- express your feelings in your own time and way
- know you won’t have all the answers
- try not to take big risks and make life changing decisions until you are ready

Where to get help

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call **000** or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Free face-to-face support

The following free services are available to people impacted by fires and drought.

- Hunter / New England – Healthwise **1800 931 540**
- North Coast - Connect to Wellbeing **1300 160 339**



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Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) – contact your local RAMHP Coordinator at www.ramhp.com.au. They are not clinicians but they can listen, provide support and help connect people to services in their local area.

If you're concerned about your own or someone else's mental health, call the **NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511** for advice or the Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

Other useful links

Head to your local Evacuation Centre. Find out what Evacuation Centres and Disaster Welfare Points are open here - www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx

If you have been directly impacted by the bushfires please register for assistance with the **Disaster Welfare Assistance Line**- currently open 7 days a week from 8:30am - 4:30pm on **1800 018 444**

Fire affected landholders requiring emergency fodder are being urged to call the **Agricultural and Animal Services Hotline** on **1800 814 647**.

Contact the **Salvation Army Disasters Assistance team** - email sal.disasters@salvationarmy.org.au or call **1300 662 217**.

For all other assistance go to www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance.aspx

Online resources – Head to our website www.ramhp.com.au/downloadable-resources/ for resources including podcasts, fact sheets, self -help quiz and our Glove Box Guide to Mental Health.

How can I help communities impacted by the bushfires?

- You can help individuals and communities impacted by the bushfires by donating to a national not-for-profit –'Givit' helps to provide exactly what is needed in disaster response and recovery. Go to www.givit.org.au to find out more
- Donate to the **Red Cross appeal** here – www.redcross.org.au/disaster-relief-and-recovery
- Donate to the **Salvation Army Appeal** here - www.salvationarmy.org.au

Please note that charities are asking people who want to help individuals and families impacted by the bushfires to donate cash instead of food or clothing.

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