

DELIVERING DISASTER RESILIENCE EDUCATION TO SCHOOL CHILDREN VIA VIRTUAL EXCURSIONS

Grace Strugnell, Rhiannon Birch, Melissa Laird, Bernadette Matthews
Life Saving Victoria

Background

In Victoria, providing essential disaster resilience education (DRE) to over half a million primary school students is an important, yet challenging task for emergency management agencies and schools. Life Saving Victoria (LSV), Ambulance Victoria (AV) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) sought a collaborative approach to delivering DRE, using video conferencing technology. Virtual excursions (VE) connect students with emergency management personnel in real-time and over distance, improving sustainability and accessibility for students, particularly in regional and rural areas.

Aim

To evaluate the feasibility of inter-agency VE to increase student safety awareness, knowledge and personal resilience.

Methods

Following inter-agency scoping activities, VE were delivered to 70 students in two Foundation (Prep) classes in metropolitan and regional Victoria. The program consisted of a virtual excursion, which focused on the theme of 'People in the community who can help us'. Content was developed by subject matter and education experts from LSV, AV and CFA. Evaluation comprised direct observation, agency and teacher interviews and student questionnaires.

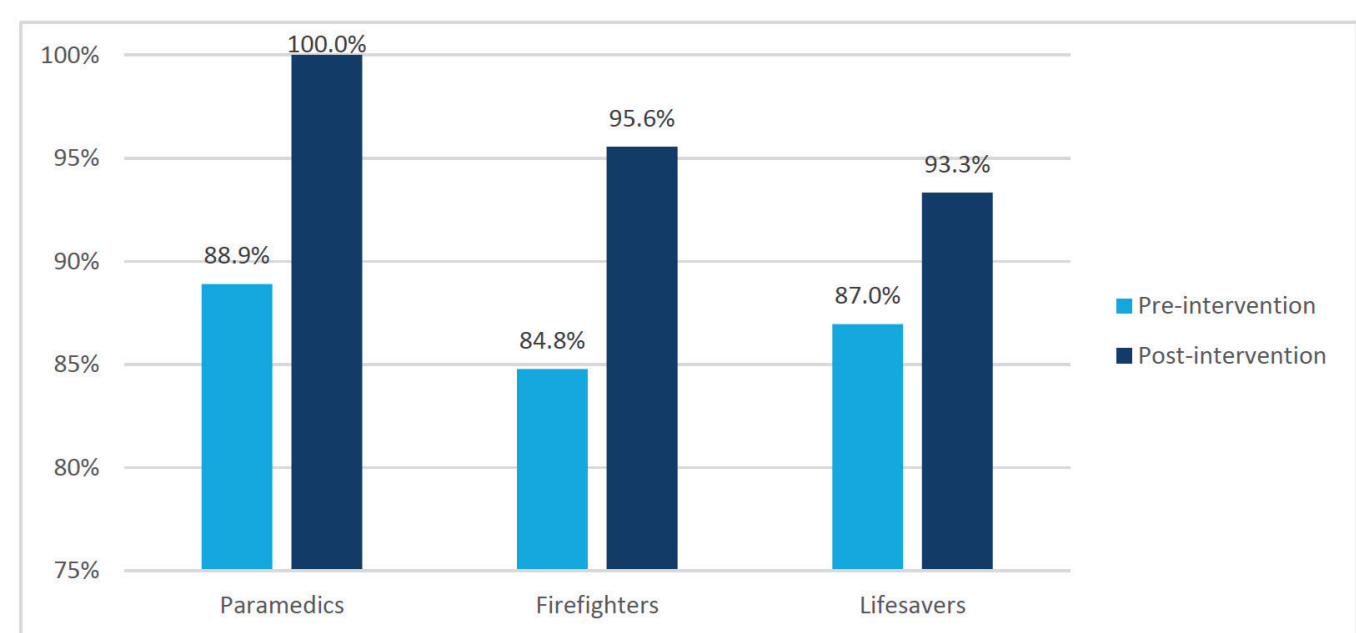


Figure 1 Proportion of students that correctly linked the emergency management agency with the emergency scenario, pre- and post-intervention

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the funding support of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust.

We also gratefully acknowledge the valuable partnerships and collaboration with Ambulance Victoria (AV) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

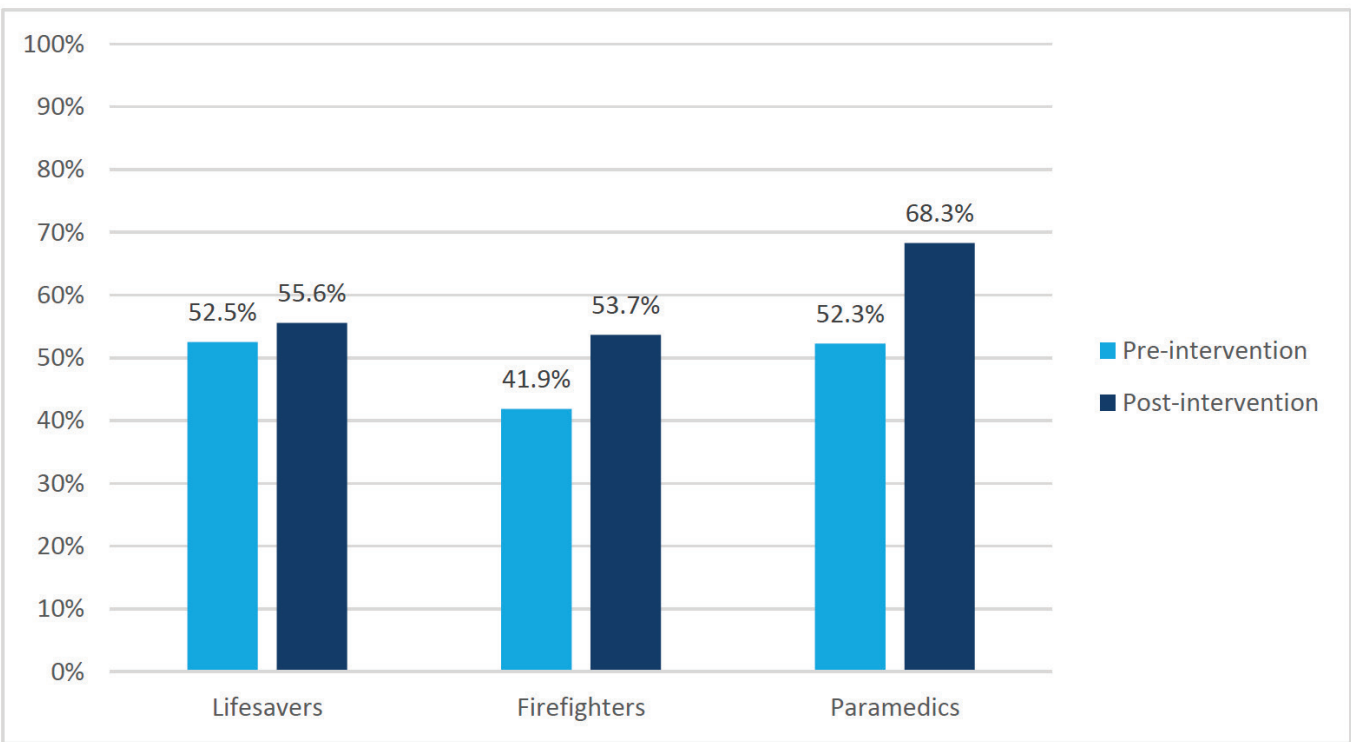


Figure 2 Proportion of students that would feel positive when talking to a member of each of the emergency management agencies, pre- and post-excursion

Results

Stakeholders agreed that VE were logistically feasible, encouraged inter-agency collaboration and met curriculum requirements for cost-effective and sustainable delivery. Students correctly linked the emergency personnel with their role following the VE and demonstrated increased positive sentiment towards the agencies. Key elements for successful VE delivery, including logistics, student engagement, equipment and technology will be described.



Conclusions

This study demonstrated that effective inter-agency collaboration and technology advancements can provide students with engaging and informative DRE, whilst removing traditional barriers for schools including curriculum constraints, time, distance and cost.

