

The inner circle: children, families and educators at the centre of natural disasters

Children and families

Support for children and families after a natural disaster is paramount. Families and children sit at the centre of the community.

“I need to be more aware of my own self-care. I really like that breathing exercise. I’ll try that at home. I think it will be good for me to remember to look after myself and to help me support my grandson.”

Be You Bushfire Response Program Grandparent

“I’m very excited. I wanted to thank you profusely. We were awarded the funding grant that you helped us submit. It made my week, so I just wanted to let you know and say thank you very much from the bottom of my heart.”

The early learning service will use the grant to create a shared outdoor community space for the preschool and support services. There will be an event to open the space which will provide services to children of all ages and community members.

Be You Bushfire Response Program Early Childhood Educator

Early childhood community

The early childhood community throughout Australia sits in the second circle as they support children and families each and every day, throughout natural disasters and traumatic events.

“It was just nice to have someone who cared enough to come and listen to us. And it gave us permission to talk.”

Be You Bushfire Response Program Early Childhood Educator

Educators

As educators continually support children and families, it is imperative that they themselves receive ongoing support. Contact Liaison Officers met with educators to provide self-care sessions, focusing on the critical importance of educators’ mental health and wellbeing. Contact Liaison Officers have experience and understand children and educators within the early childhood sector. Providing resources, support, knowledge, time and understanding, they were able to build a relationship with the whole early learning community.

“What a privileged space it is to walk alongside educators and community, providing both group wellbeing sessions and safe space to have individual conversations about wellbeing. I have watched, listened and heard educators share their own wellbeing self-awareness and self-care strategies. I have seen the post-traumatic growth educators have experienced - from tired, exhausted, flat educators who experienced varying degrees of stress related to bushfires - to renewed, excited, refuelled educators ready to embed wellbeing and self-care as a priority to support them personally as well as professional early childhood leaders and educators.”

Michelle Wozatka, Early Childhood Australia Contact Liaison Officer

Be You Bushfire Response Program

The Be You Bushfire Response Program is an innovative model developed in response to the Black Summer bushfires. The Program recognises the role of early learning services and schools in promoting positive mental health and their unique position in supporting disaster recovery and resilience.

“Early childhood services have created wellbeing spaces within their staff room to allow staff to have an area for reflective conversation and to support one another each day.”

Be You Bushfire Response Program Contact Liaison Officer