

2 IN 5

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA WERE IMPACTED BY THE BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES

AFTER THE DISASTER: RECOVERY FOR AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN

1 HOW DISASTERS CAN AFFECT CHILDREN

After the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019-20, UNICEF Australia and Royal Far West formed a partnership to deliver a tailored psychosocial support program to children and young people impacted. Drawing on UNICEF's global experience in responding to disasters and Royal Far West's deep relationships in regional communities, the team worked with communities to:

- Ask them what would help in recovery, captured through a formal *Needs Assessment*
- Develop the Bushfire Recovery Program with an independent evaluation conducted by Charles Sturt University to develop evidence about what works to improve outcomes for children.

A recent literature review, commissioned by the Spinifex Network and co-authored by Charles Sturt University and Royal Far West*, shows an increased risk of poorer mental health outcomes for children as a result of bushfires and found an absence of existing evidence about which interventions lead to better outcomes for these children.

LONG TERM IMPACT OF BUSHFIRE EXPOSURE FOR CHILDREN



Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, poorer academic achievement and lower education levels and decreased social mobility



Effects often are not immediately obvious but can show up in the medium to long term



Greater impact for vulnerable children

PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

In addition to the partnership between Royal Far West and UNICEF Australia, this Program has been made possible through other supporting partners including Paul Ramsay Foundation, HP Australia, Charles Sturt University, GIVIT, Little Wings and NSW Rural Doctors Network.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- We acknowledge those communities who lived through the Black Summer bushfire disaster, with each person having their own experiences. We acknowledge the resilience, courage and strength which has been shown by communities and the ongoing efforts to maintain & grow this each day.
- We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and sea, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

*[1] The Impact of Bushfire on the Wellbeing of Children Living in Rural and Remote Australia: A Rapid Review. Supporting rural health and medical research for a stronger and healthier rural Australia | spinifexnetwork.com.au. AUTHORS: Michael Curtin¹, Robert Brooks^{1,2}, Sarah Verdoni¹, Judith Crockett¹, Gene Hodgins³ AFFILIATIONS: 1) School of Community Health, Charles Sturt University, Albury, NSW. 2) Royal Far West, Sydney, NSW. 3) School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW

2 WHAT OUR PROGRAM IS DELIVERING

The Bushfire Recovery Program is community-based and is delivered through Primary Schools and Preschools, providing support to children (0-12yrs) and the key adults that surround them. The Program is delivered in person during community visits, with ongoing support and therapy offered via technology. The Program is led by a multidisciplinary health team of Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Speech Pathologists and Psychologists. Each community has the choice of which support options to take up. These could include group programs for children, parent/carer sessions and educator workshops.

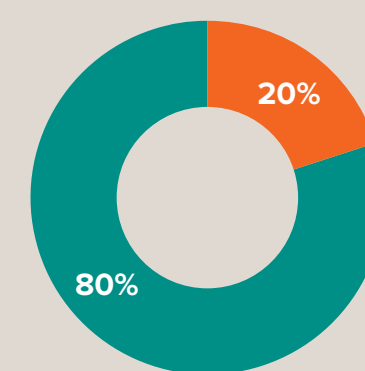
CHILDREN → ADULTS - PARENTS/CARERS, EDUCATORS & PROFESSIONALS → SCHOOLS, PRESCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES



968

CHILDREN SUPPORTED THROUGH GROUP WORK

- 195 Identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 46 Identifying from a CALD background



SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

- Identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Non Indigenous



SUPPORTING THOSE AROUND THE CHILD

- 1,104 Parents/carers
- 442 Educators
- 181 Professionals



25 SCHOOLS SUPPORTED



12 PRESCHOOLS SUPPORTED



35+ COMMUNITIES SUPPORTED



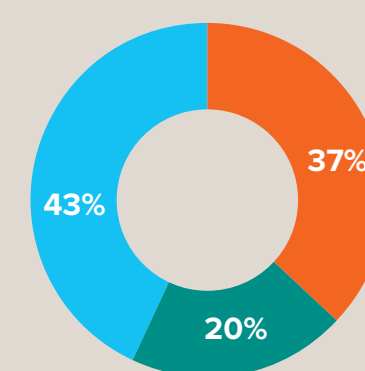
37+ EDUCATOR SESSIONS DELIVERED



99

CHILDREN SUPPORTED THROUGH TELECARE THERAPY

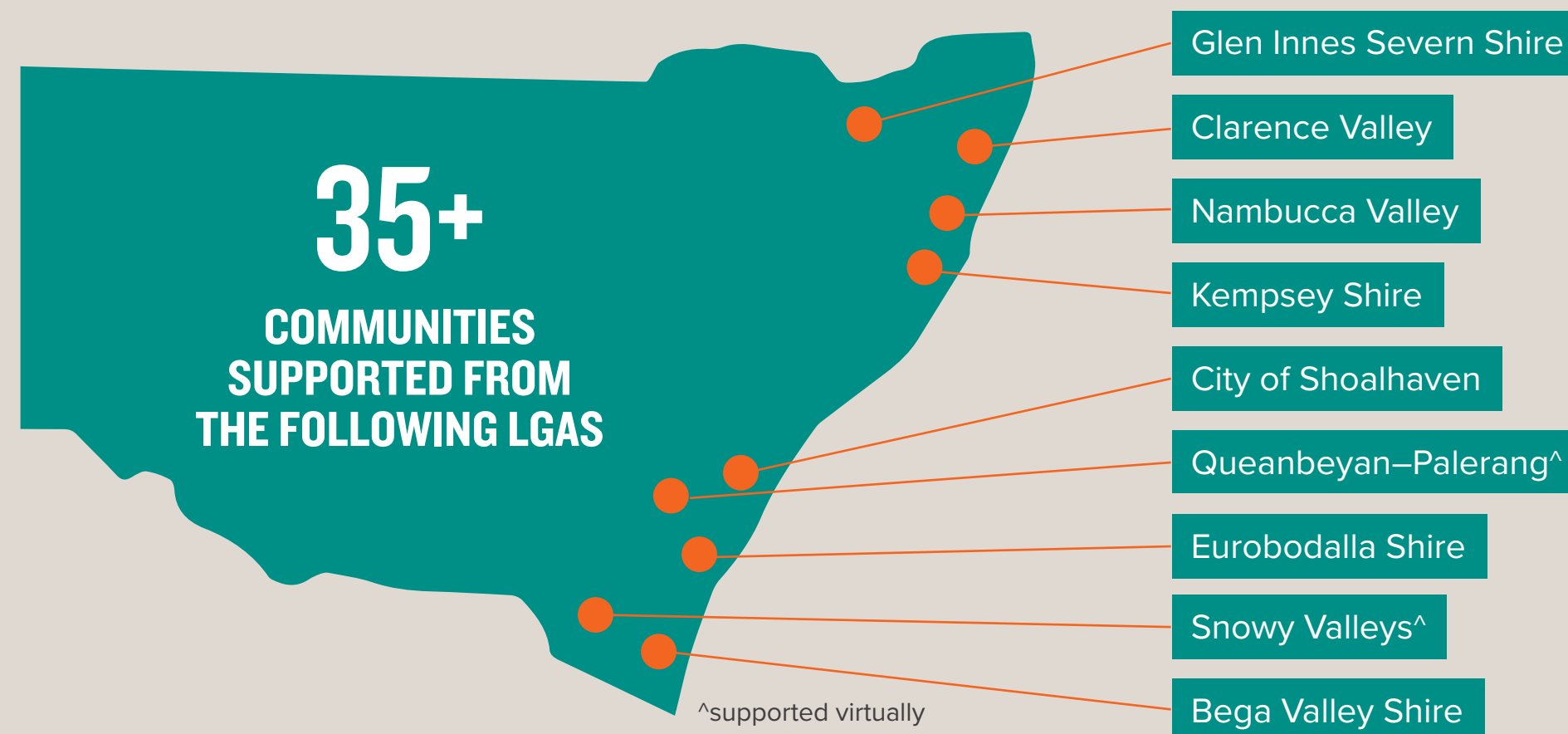
- 37 Occupational Therapy
- 20 Speech Therapy
- 42 Psychology Therapy



TYPE OF THERAPY

- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Psychology Therapy

3 WHERE WE ARE WORKING



4 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

TO GUIDE FUTURE DISASTER PLANNING, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

UNICEF Australia and Royal Far West have called on governments, businesses, non-government agencies and philanthropic organisations to invest urgently in research, policies and programs to strengthen the resilience of our children and young people.

Scan the QR code to learn more about our key recommendations and read our full Advocacy Report.



“AT FIRST I REALLY DIDN'T LIKE TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT MY PROBLEMS AND FEELINGS, BUT NOW I FEEL BETTER WHEN I DO THAT.”
CHILD

Children enjoyed the range of activities to support their emotions. Here they are 'Body Mapping' their feelings.



TO FIND OUT MORE PLEASE CONTACT

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