

# The impact of bushfire on the wellbeing of children living in rural and remote Australia.



## Long term impact of bushfire exposure:

- Children exposed to bushfires may be at increased risk of poorer wellbeing outcomes including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder
- Other negative effects include poorer academic achievement and lower education levels and decreased social mobility
- Findings suggest that the impact of bushfire exposure may not always be apparent in the short term but may become more pronounced later in life
- Children particularly at risk are those from more vulnerable backgrounds who may have compounding factors that limit their ability to overcome bushfire trauma



## Negative effects of bushfire exposure were more likely among children who:

- Were exposed to additional adversity (e.g. emotional and behavioural disturbance, dysfunctional parenting, and alcohol and cannabis misuse)
- Experienced brief separation or absence from important caregivers during the event
- Experienced post-traumatic morbidity of parents. Parental distress, family conflict, and parenting behaviour and practices may have contributed to the children and adolescents experiencing mental health symptoms. The impact of the bushfire upon children was determined more by their parents' attitudes and responses than by the intensity of the danger experienced.

## Short, medium and long term strategies:

**When planning and implementing interventions for children affected by disasters such as bushfires, short, medium and long term strategies need to be considered.**

While no interventions were identified that specifically target this population, effective strategies may include multidimensional community-based interventions that not only involve children, but also families, schools and community organisations.



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