

Strengthening School Communities 2016-2019

Building teacher and school capacity to cope with disasters and other forms of collective trauma impacting the school community.

Multiple methods



Analysis of Victorian NAPLAN 2011 and 2013 data ($n= 24,642$) to guide teachers in relation to post trauma student impacts



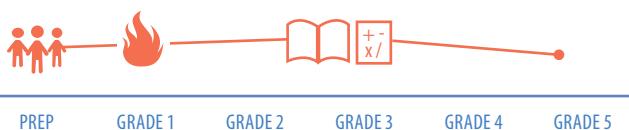
Educational workforce interviews ($n=10$), representing schools, Department of Education & Training, & School Support Service staff to identify disaster preparedness training & trauma needs support.



Upgrade and pilot of the online teacher training program – Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR-T)

Results

Primary school students in **schools in bushfire affected** areas showed **reduced academic progress** in reading and numeracy two to four years later.



Citation: Gibbs L, Nursey J, Cook J, Irerton G, Alkemade N, Roberts M, Gallagher H.C, Bryant R, Block K, Molyneaux R, Forbes D. Delayed disaster impacts on academic performance of primary school children. *Child Development* (2019) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cdev.13200>

There were **changed demands** on school staff in post disaster school communities:



an increased emphasis on student wellbeing



additional support to families

School staff were at **risk of reduced mental health** and wellbeing from their **own disaster exposure** and vicarious trauma experienced through supporting children and families.

School staff tended to prioritise student and family needs above their own self-care.



[Self-care is] so hard to do when you're thrust into that position because you know that you should be looking after yourself but you know your prime thing is to look after everybody else.

The SPR-T review identified that an adjusted approach is required for future disaster events that more adequately addresses teacher support needs (see study recommendations).

Impacts

Publication in *Child Development*, a leading international children's health journal

Victorian State Government decision to invest **\$1million** in State Government funding for **additional programs** to support bushfire affected school communities

State government invested an additional **\$200,000** in further research about longer term academic impacts

The recommendations will be released and widely disseminated to ensure teacher health and support needs are addressed in future disasters