

# Supporting School Staff Post-Disaster

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to guide support for school staff following a major natural disaster or mass trauma event. They draw on the collective findings from the Strengthening School Communities study and provide a proposal for best practice.

These recommendations may draw on existing supports or require new services. They are not exclusive of other needs and related supports that students, teachers and parents may require including offline programmes and support, and flexibility in delivery and reporting. The term 'educational settings' is used to signify a range of potential settings including preschools, primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary education settings:



1. Provide all staff in disaster affected educational settings with an intensive support program delivered locally **before students return** which includes:

- Establishment of a supportive workplace culture
- Key principles for **supporting students** who have experienced trauma, grief or loss
- Guide to the unique **impacts** of place-based disaster events
- **Self-care strategies** for teachers, principals and other staff in educational settings.



2. Use current **evidence-informed programs** to inform the content of the intensive disaster response program offered to educational staff.



3. Revisit and extend the **intensive professional staff support program** at key intervals (for example: 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 12 months, 2 years, 5 years and/or at key milestones or anniversaries) to address emerging issues and support staff capacity over time.



4. Offer **regular wellbeing checks**, potentially conducted by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), to all school staff impacted by disasters as a way of destigmatising help seeking.



5. **Monitor staff support needs** and **refer** individual staff to trauma-informed interventions where appropriate.



6. Appoint **additional teaching and support staff** and/or volunteers (potentially seconded or invited out of retirement) to educational settings as needed in the years following the disaster event to **help meet the extra administrative, social, emotional and learning** demands.



7. Adjust **departmental administrative requirements and timelines** for disaster affected educational settings to acknowledge the additional demands on staff and students.



8. Conduct research to **assess the feasibility, outcomes and impacts** of this adjusted approach for staff involved in supporting disaster recovery in educational communities.



9. Conduct research to **explore the different issues** experienced by staff and students in different types of educational setting affected by disasters.