

## **Reporting on catastrophic fires and reducing moral panic**

**please cascade to all media staff covering bushfire stories**

*Mindframe* asks media to be aware of the risk of sensationalising stories and causing further harm to already negatively affected communities and those residing in at risk communities.

Our thoughts are with the communities grieving lives already lost, and with families and communities who have been impacted. We also acknowledge our first responders who are helping manage the emergency response around the clock.

Media are encouraged to be mindful when reporting on the impact of the bushfires as this can increase community anxiety and exacerbate the distress of some individuals – instead, please use each story as an opportunity to inform the public on safety messaging.

*Mindframe* strongly recommends looking after yourself and staff during the coverage of this natural disaster. Due to the distressing nature of this reporting, media and communications professionals are encouraged to safeguard their own health and wellbeing at this time. See more information below on self-care.

### **Tips to help reduce moral panic:**

- Direct audiences to official sources for continuous updates
  - NSW
    - [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/emergency-information](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/emergency-information)
    - [www.facebook.com/nswrfs](https://www.facebook.com/nswrfs)
    - [www.twitter.com/nswrfs](https://www.twitter.com/nswrfs)
  - QLD
    - [www.disaster.qld.gov.au](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au)
    - [www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au/Pages/State-of-Fire-Emergency-Declared.aspx](http://www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au/Pages/State-of-Fire-Emergency-Declared.aspx)
    - <https://newsroom.ppsba.qld.gov.au/>
    - [www.facebook.com/QLdFireandEmergencyServices/](https://www.facebook.com/QLdFireandEmergencyServices/)
    - [www.twitter.com/QLdFES](https://www.twitter.com/QLdFES)
- Seek comment from community leaders rather than people negatively impacted by the fire
- Encourage affected people to seek help early for any psychological distress

### **Links to help develop stories related to communicating safely during a natural disaster:**

The mental health and suicide prevention sector have developed excellent resources which collate helpful information around how to cope with natural disasters. We encourage all media outlets to consider referencing these documents when discussing communities affected by the bushfires.

**Lifeline:**

- Children: [www.lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/helping-your-children-cope-with-the-after-effects-of-a-natural-disaster-wfvfnlse.pdf](http://www.lifeline.org.au/static/uploads/files/helping-your-children-cope-with-the-after-effects-of-a-natural-disaster-wfvfnlse.pdf)
- Adults: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/media-centre/natural-disaster-support>

**Headspace**

- talking to children and youth: <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/how-to-support-your-child-after-a-natural-disaster/>
- for youth: <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-the-stress-of-natural-disasters/>

**Beyond Blue**

- <https://beyou.edu.au/-/media/pdfs/fact-sheet-pdfs/how-to-provide-support-after-a-natural-disaster.pdf>

**Other sources of helpful information to develop stories:**

**Legal Aid NSW:** <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/factsheets-and-resources/your-workplace-rights-during-natural-disasters-and-emergencies>

**Assess EAP:** <https://www.accesseap.com.au/resources/accesseap-blog/support-through-a-natural-disaster>

**NSW Natural Disaster Assistance:** <https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/natural-disaster-assistance-schemes.aspx>

**QLD Recovery after a disaster:** <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/recovery-after-disaster>

**Key national 24/7 crisis support services include:**

**Lifeline** 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Suicide Call Back Service** 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

**MensLine Australia** 1300 789 978 [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

**Beyond Blue** 1300 224 636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

**Key Youth Support Services include:**

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

**headspace:** 1800 650 890 [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

**ReachOut** [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

**Media self-care**

Reporting suicide can also impact the welfare of journalists. To provide support to media professionals *Mindframe*, in consultation with the [DART Centre Asia Pacific](#), has developed journalism self-care resources. These resources can be found [here](#).

For further information or advice, please visit the [Mindframe website](#) or contact:



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