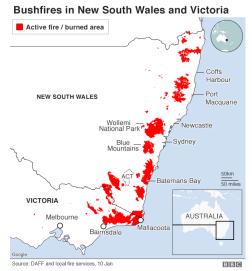# RECOMMENDED BUSHFIRE VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAM # 3
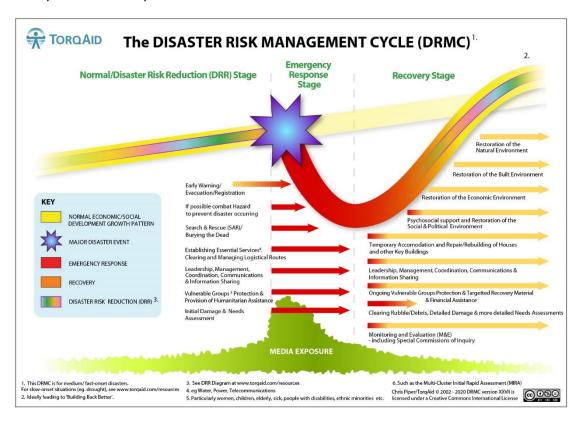
Overview

This proposed Bushfire Volunteer Training Program has been developed from the work which Chris Piper has been doing as Bushfire Recovery Adviser (BRA) in support of the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV)[1] since early March 2020. The BUV has been supporting bushfire-affected communities in the east of Victoria since the beginning of 2020. A reasonably substantial sum of money was raised from Baptist supporters, to provide relief and recovery stage assistance to bushfire-affected communities in Eastern Victoria. The BUV appointed a Melbourne-based Bushfire Coordinator to coordinate this work, and he liaised closely with three Baptist Union churches on the ground, namely Corryong in the Murray Valley region, and Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance in Gippsland. The Coordinator and the BRA visited these locations in early March 2020, with the Coordinator repeating these visits in June. As part of his work for the BUV, the BRA prepared a paper relating to training for field coordinators and volunteers, particularly focussing on psycho-social issues.

Bushfires in New South Wales and Victoria

Source: DAFF and local fire services, 10 Jan

The recovery process is following a classical recovery process as indicated by the Recovery Stage of the Disaster Risk Management Cycle (DRMC). The situation is complicated however by COVID-19 restrictions, which have both adversely impacted on affected households and communities, and on the delivery of assistance by churches and other stakeholders.

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[1] www.buv.org.au

By mid 2020, BUV field staff and coordinators were facing the challenges outlined below.

- o Recognising, and responding to, the range of psychosocial issues which are likely to impact on bushfire affected individuals, families and communities
- o Noting that temporary accommodation (for examples in caravans or rented accommodation) will be a challenge, particularly over the winter months
- o Noting that no plans for rebuilding can take place, until debris has been safely cleared from affected homesteads[2]
- o Noting the challenges of economic restoration, particularly for primary producers and small businesses
- o Noting the need to coordinate effectively with other assisting stakeholders, where suitable and possible, this taking place through Community Recovery Hubs (CHBs) and Community Recovery Committees (CRCs)
- o Noting the adverse effects which the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic can have on all the above mentioned activities, and looking at ways of mitigating these adverse effects

Whilst the monetary donations given to the BUV had been significant (but not huge), senior staff recognised that they were in a unique position to do something meaningful. Working through local churches, their relational position in community, one of centrality and longevity, was unique enough to allow them to take an immediate approach to provide meaningful support.

Training

It was recognised that field staff and volunteers ideally should receive some appropriate training, particularly in psychosocial support. The Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry (VCCEM)[3] run a program in Psychological First Aid and Emotional Spiritual Care, and it was recommended that this comprise the core component of this training. This training is also recognised by key emergency service personnel throughout Victoria. It should be noted that the Australian Red Cross (ARC) also facilitates training in a similar program, namely Psychological First Aid (PFA). Following a review of the pre-course reading component of this VCCEM program, the BRA made recommendations that training should ideally involve three complementary components:

- o For BUV field staff and volunteer coordinators to participate in this VCCEM training (or a combination of this and the ARC PFA training)
- o To complement this training by encouraging individuals to have access to the following:
  - ✓ Some Essential Reading resources
  - ✓ Some Supplementary Reading resources
- o To ideally, where possible, have staff link into recovery Question & Answer (Q&A) webinars, facilitated by experienced Clinical Psychologists, and organised through the ARC[4].

The VCCEM Training Program[5]

VCC EM training is a comprehensive training package designed to equip members of faith communities to support affected residents through their participation in VCCEM deployments. The Psychological First Aid and Emotional Spiritual Care training consists of two components, namely Pre-course reading, and attendance at a one-day VCCEM training program.

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[2] The removal of destroyed building material is the responsibility of the contracted company Grocon – www.grocon.com

[3] See https://vccem.org.au

[4] See https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/bushfire-recovery-events-and-webinars

[5] See again https://vccem.org.au

Australian Red Cross Bushfire Recovery Events and Webinars.
The Australian Red Cross (ARC), has throughout 2020 been organising a series of Bushfire Recovery Events and Webinars, drawing down on the expertise of relevant, highly qualified and skilled, individuals. See the link below for details, https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/bushfire-recovery-events-and-webinars. Videos of earlier events include:

- o Lyn Page: Supporting young people through disasters
- o Dr Rob Gordon: Bushfire recovery during COVID-19
- o Kris Newton & Anne Crestani: Supporting community organisations through disaster recovery
- o Steve Pascoe: what is community-led recovery?
- o Anne Leadbetter: Local government & community-led recovery

Notes on Essential and Supplementary Reading Resources
The following are some notes on the Essential and Recommended Reading Resources. The bibliography for these resources is included at the end of this paper.

Essential Reading

- o The first article is the University of Melbourne's *Ten Year Beyond Bushfires: Community Resilience and Recovery* research findings on the 2009 Victorian Black Saturday fires which were designed to guide disaster resilience policy and services.
- o Many of these University of Melbourne recommendations were incorporated into the second document, namely the Victorian State Government's *Psychosocial support: A Framework for Emergencies.*
- o The third document is the framework for the Australian Red Cross (ARC)'s *Psychosocial First Aid…..*program

Supplementary Reading

- o The initial item is Piper's January 2020 article for the Geography Teacher's Association of Victoria's (GTAV) quarterly magazine on the 2019/2020 Australian bushfires
- o This is complemented by two articles reporting on the first six months (Jan-June 2020) recovery process, as covered in the Australian Red Cross' Six Monthly Report, and the Resilience NSW recovery publication.
- o This is also the opportune time to view the BUV videos produced as a result of the two field visits made in early March 2020
- o The Hobfall and 2006 Gordon article together highlight key psychosocial issues relating to the effects of traumatic events on individuals, with the Australian Psychological Society reference focusing in more specifically on bushfires.
- o The 2004 Gordon and Aldrich articles both focus on social capital issues for communities affected by emergencies, whilst the Parkinson and Zara article looks at gender relationship issues following Black Saturday.
- o The Geer video looks at how one Victorian bushfire community (Strathewen) commenced its recovery process from the 2009 fires, whilst the Regional Australia Institute article highlights the recovery process in Marysville from that same period

Essential Reading Bibliography
University of Melbourne. (2016). *Ten Years Beyond Bushfires: Community, Resilience & Recovery. Final report 2010-2016.* Particularly note the Brief Summary of Beyond Bushfires Findings; the Beyond Bushfires 2016 report; and Richardson's report (What we have learned about the impact of bushfires – cited earlier in this bibliography). .
https://beyondbushfires.org.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2183511/Web_Beyond-Bushfires-Final-Report-2016-copy.pdf

Bushfire Volunteer Training Program # 3

State Government of Victoria (Human Services). (2014). *Psychosocial Support: A Framework for Emergencies.* https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-08/Psychosocial%20support%20-%20a%20framework%20for%20emergencies.pdf

Australian Red Cross. (2019). *Psychological First Aid. Supporting People affected by Disaster in Australia.* Retrieved from https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/dc21542f-16e4-44ba-8e3a-4f6b907bba6f/Psychological-First-Aid-An-Australian-Guide-04-20.pdf.aspx

Supplementary Reading Bibliography & Videos
The 2019/2010 Australian bushfires, and the BUV's Early Recovery Response
Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) videos on field visits to eastern Victoria in early March 2020:
- o Corryong, March 5-6th 2020, https://www.buv.com.au/news/corryong-and-surrounds-from-bushfires-to-covid-19
- o Gippsland, March 11-12th 2020 https://www.buv.com.au/news/an-update-on-our-response-to-the-bushfires

Piper, C.A.H., (2020). *Bushfires: Is the 2019/2020 bushfire season a portent for the future?*'. GTAV Interaction Article Vol 48, No 1, March 2020. https://www.gtav.asn.au/resources/interaction-current-issues, with copy of this article also found at www.torqaid.com/gtav-bushfire-article

Australian Red Cross. (2020). *Australian Bushfires Report, January to June 2020.* Retrieved from https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/fd3287ff-c893-4ba4-a34c-e41940b453c6/Report-6mth-FINAL-200708-1.pdf.aspx

Resilience NSW. (2020). *NSW Bushfire Recovery: Supporting NSW Communities following the 2019-2020 Bushfires.* Retrieved from https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Resilience%20NSW%20Bushfire%20Recovery%20Report%20June%2030.pdf

Further Psychological (inc. COVID-19) , Resilience, and Social Capital Documents
Aldrich, D. PREP Talks. (2018). *Social Capital in Disaster Mitigation & Recovery.* Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkIsNItmi30

Australian Psychological Society (APS). 2020. *Australian Bushfires 2020. Psychological Preparation & Recovery.* Retrieved from https://www.psychology.org.au/Australian-bushfires-2020

Gordon, R.(2020). *Bushfire Recovery during COVID-19 (Special webinar for bushfire communities across Australia).* YouTube, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iQeaIJg_1Q

Gordon, R. (2020). *Your well-being. Living close to long running fires.* YouTube, retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBvJw3nBqKg

Gordon, R. (2006). Australian Journal of Emergency Management, Vol 21, No 1, Feb 2006. *Acute Responses to Emergencies. Findings & observations of 20 Years in the Field.* Retrieved from https://ajem.infoservices.com.au/items/AJEM-21-01-05

Gordon, R. (2004). Australian Psychological Society. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 19(4), 16-22. *The Social System as a Site of Disaster Impact and Resource for Recovery*. Retrieved from http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AUJlEmMgmt/2004/52.pdf

Bushfire Volunteer Training Program # 3

Hobfall, S. (2007). *Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence.* Retrieved from
http://www.cde.state.co.us/healthandwellness/schoolnursinghealthconditions

Parkinson, D., & Zara, C. (2012). Women's Health. *The way he tells it: Relationships after Black Saturday.* Retrieved from http://www.whealth.com.au/documents/publications/whp-TheWayHeTellsIt.pdf

Recovery Video & Report from the 2009 Victorian bushfires
Geer, C. (2012). Rebel Films. *Then the Wind Changed.* https://beamafilm.com/watch/then-the-wind-changed

Regional Australia Institute. (2013). *From Recovery to Renewal: Case Studies Report.* Retrieved from http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/RAI-Natural-Disasters-Report-Case-Studies.pdf

Additional Resources
More detailed bushfire bibliography and agency directory details can be found as follows:
- o Bushfire-related Bibliography - www.torqaid.com/bushfires-bibliography
- o Bushfire-related Agency Directory – www.torqaid.com/bushfires-agency-directory

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Appendix A: Map of burnt area in Eastern Victoria, early 2020

2019/20 Eastern Victoria final bushfire footprint