

January 2026 Bushfires

Information to support community mental health and wellbeing

This information is to help people impacted by the January 2026 bushfires.

The content is from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Agriculture Victoria, the Australian Red Cross and the Department of Health.

The information is public-facing messaging that can be used by council communications staff to support people.

In an emergency (24 hours, 7 days a week)

Call Triple Zero ([000](tel:000)) in life threatening emergencies.

Check emergency.vic.gov.au.

It's normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed or in need of someone to talk to in a disaster. Free, confidential, 24/7 help is available:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

There is a link between disasters and an increase in family violence. It can happen to anyone.

1800RESPECT is a free service. They offer support to people impacted by family violence. To talk to someone, call [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732), text something like 'hello' to [0458 737 732](tel:0458737732), or chat online at 1800respect.org.au.

Information in other languages

The recent bushfires have impacted many people. Information about trauma, including how to manage trauma in children and families, is available in 35 languages.

For more information, visit:

- [Trauma - help for your reaction and recovery](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/trauma-reaction-and-recovery#information-in-your-language)¹
- [Trauma and children – tips for parents and carers](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-children-tips-for-parents)²

To get help from an interpreter when calling helplines, press 9. You can also call TIS on 131 450.

¹ <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/trauma-reaction-and-recovery#information-in-your-language>

² <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-children-tips-for-parents>

Understanding your reactions

Everyone reacts differently.

It is natural to reflect on what has happened. Take time to recognise:

- your strengths
- the positive actions you took to stay safe
- the positive actions you took to support yourself and others.

It is understandable if you are feeling concerned. You might be experiencing a mix of strong emotions, thoughts or physical reactions right now.

If you have faced bushfires before, this might be a particularly challenging time. It could bring up memories and feelings of sadness, fear, and grief.

It is normal to have these responses, and they usually reduce over time.

Talking about your worries and feelings can help. It is important to stay connected and identify what you can do to address your concerns.

Seeking help is a sign of strength, and often the first step in recovery. Recovery is a personal journey. For some people it can happen quickly, for others it will take more time or be ongoing.

If you or someone close to you is feeling overwhelmed:

- contact your local doctor (GP)
- call Lifeline (13 11 14)
- call Beyond Blue (1300 224 636).
- in an emergency, call 000 (Triple Zero)
- visit [Trauma recovery services | Better Health Channel](#)³

Children and young people can also access:

- [Headspace counselling](#)⁴ for young people aged 12-25 (1800 650 890)
- [Kids helpline counselling](#)⁵ for children and young people (1800 551 800)

Looking after yourself and others

Your wellbeing is important

- Share your thoughts and feelings with people you trust. This can make them easier to manage.
- Stay connected with others, even if you're not ready to talk about what happened.
- Recognise your strengths and the positive actions you took to stay safe.
- Recognise the steps you took to support yourself and others.
- Set realistic expectations for yourself and your family.
- Reduce unnecessary demands on yourself.

³ <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/servicesandsupport/trauma-recovery-services>

⁴ <https://headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/connect-with-us/>

⁵ <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Maintain your physical health

- Prioritise regular sleep, meals and water.
- Avoid or limit using alcohol or drugs to cope.
- Focus on essential activities first.

For carers of children

[The Road to Resilience podcast – Children, Families and Trauma](#)⁶ podcast is available on major streaming platforms. For more information about the podcast, visit [Relief and recovery after emergencies and disasters](#)⁷.

[Stories to help children understand warnings](#)⁸, include three picture books.

[Trauma and children – tips for parents and carers](#)⁹, including translated versions.

For farmers and landowners

Please reach out for help – don't go it alone.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) provides specialist wellbeing support to farmers and their communities affected by fires. We recognise that you may have experienced previous and consecutive fires and drought.

There are wellbeing and mental health services available in the community to help you manage stress. You can also speak with family and friends or visit your local doctor (GP).

Listen to the [AgVic Talk podcast](#)¹⁰ for more helpful advice.

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RCFS)

The Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) offers specialist support to farmers and their communities.

They provide:

- financial counselling
- wellbeing support for mental stress from financial issues.

RFCS can help you to:

- develop strategies to cope with stress
- recognise signs of poor health in yourself or your workers
- set up a support network with family, friends or community
- find groups or activities in the community that can help
- access health services through referrals.

For more information, call 1300 735 578 or visit the [RCFS website](#)¹¹.

⁶ <https://roadtoresilience.transistor.fm/>

⁷ <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/relief-and-recovery-after-emergencies-and-disasters>

⁸ <https://ausws.emergency.vic.gov.au/index.html>

⁹ <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/trauma-and-children-tips-for-parents>

¹⁰ <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/podcasts/agvic-talk-podcast-series/agvic-talk-season-9#h2-2>

¹¹ <https://wsrccs.com.au/wellbeing>

National Centre for Farmer Health

The [National Centre for Farmer Health](https://farmerhealth.org.au/support-hub-victoria)¹² provides mental health resources for Victorian farmers and agricultural communities.

Other help from Red Cross

Stay connected in an emergency

Australian Red Cross helps people stay connected with family, friends and loved ones during emergencies through **Register.Find.Reunite (RFR)**.

If you have been impacted by the January 2026 bushfires, you can use RFR to:

- register to let others know you are safe
- search for family or friends you are concerned about
- request help if you are separated from loved ones.

RFR is free and available to anyone affected by an emergency. To access Register.Find.Reunite, visit redcross.org.au.

Returning home after a bushfire

Returning home after a bushfire can be an emotional and challenging time. Even when it is safe to return, it is common to feel overwhelmed, anxious or distressed by what you may see and what people tell you.

Visit [Returning home after a bushfire | Australian Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-after-a-bushfire/)¹³ for practical advice on:

- preparing to return safely
- looking after your physical and emotional wellbeing
- supporting children and others who may be affected
- accessing further help if needed.

Supporting children and young people

Children and young people may react differently depending on their age, personality and experiences. Common reactions include changes in sleep, behaviour, mood or concentration.

Parents, carers and adults can support children by:

- listening calmly and answering questions honestly
- reassuring them that they are safe
- keeping routines where possible
- encouraging expression through play, drawing or conversation.

For more information, visit: [Helping children and young people cope with crisis](https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/downloads/pdfs/shella/19060-red-crisis-children-booklet-d11-176x250-web.pdf).¹⁴

¹² <https://farmerhealth.org.au/support-hub-victoria>

¹³ <https://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-after-a-bushfire/>

¹⁴ <https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/downloads/pdfs/shella/19060-red-crisis-children-booklet-d11-176x250-web.pdf>

Local and phone support from the Department of Health

Free Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals are a free service for Victorians aged 26 and over.

They provide treatment, care and support for your mental health and wellbeing close to home.

You don't need a GP referral, Medicare card or mental health care plan.

They provide access to a wide range of professional and confidential support, including from psychologists, peer workers and other mental health workers

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| Bairnsdale and Orbost (servicing East Gippsland Shire) | Tel: 1300 000 352 <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> 24 Service Street, Bairnsdale 3875 |
| Bendigo and Echuca (servicing Greater Bendigo City, Loddon and Campaspe) | Tel. 1800 332 501 Bendigo <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> Tel: 03 5497 5600 3/15 Hopetoun Street, Bendigo 3550 Echuca <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> Tel: 03 5412 6600 222 Ogilvie Avenue, Echuca 3564 |
| Benalla, Wangaratta and Mansfield (servicing Mansfield Shire, Benalla Rural City Council and Wangaratta Rural City Council) | Tel. 1800 000 842 <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> Benalla 90-94 Nunn Street, Benalla 3672 Wangaratta 76a Reid Street, Wangaratta 3677 Mansfield 31 Highett Street, Mansfield 3722 |
| Mildura (servicing Rural City of Mildura) | Tel. 1300 000 667 <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> 2, 124 Deakin Avenue, Mildura 3500 |
| Mount Alexander (servicing Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields and Macedon Ranges) | Tel. 03 4442 9100 <i>(call for support)</i> |
| Shepparton (servicing Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie and Moira Shire) | Shepparton <i>(walk-ins and bookings)</i> Tel. 1300 000 559 116 Corio Street, Shepparton 3630 |

Free Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs

Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs (Hubs) can help you with many mental health challenges, including:

- lowered mood and anxiety
- homelessness
- financial difficulties
- social isolation.

All support is free and available to Victorians of all ages. You do not need a referral from a GP or health professional. Hubs provide a mix of face-to-face support, telehealth, mobile outreach, and online delivery.

Call 1300 375 330 to have a chat about your needs or you can drop by one of the walk-in services:

- Ararat Rural City
Ballarat Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
105 Dana Street, Ballarat 3350
- Corangamite Shire
Warrnambool Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
24-36 Fairy Street, Warrnambool 3280
- Golden Plains Shire
Ballarat Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
105 Dana Street, Ballarat 3350
- Horsham Rural City
Horsham Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
185 Baillie Street, Horsham 3400
- Pyrenees Shire
Ballarat Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
105 Dana Street, Ballarat 3350
- Wellington Shire
Cowes and Wonthaggi Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
(outreach service only)

Partners in Wellbeing

If a Mental Health and Wellbeing Local or Hub is not open near you, you can call Partners in Wellbeing on 1300 375 330 Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm.

Available statewide, Partners in Wellbeing offers free, phone-based support for Victorians aged 16 and over who are experiencing mental health and wellbeing challenges. You do not need a Medicare card or to be an Australian citizen/resident.

Visit [Partners in Wellbeing](https://partnersinwellbeing.org.au)¹⁵ for more information.

Relief and recovery services

The Victorian Government and your local council can help you find other relief and recovery services.

For information about relief services:

¹⁵ <https://partnersinwellbeing.org.au>

- Visit the [VicEmergency website](https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/)¹⁶
- Call the VicEmergency hotline on 1800 226 226. Press 9 for an interpreter.

For information about recovery support:

- Visit the [Recovery page](#)
- Call the Emergency Recovery hotline on 1800 560 760. Press 9 for an interpreter or call TIS on 131450.

You can also check your local council's website and social media pages.

To receive this document in another format, [email the Emergency Management Branch](#) <emb@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

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More information is available at <<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/relief-and-recovery-after-emergencies-and-disasters>>

¹⁶ <https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>