



Save the Children

# JOURNEY OF HOPE

## Building resilience after disaster

Photos: Claire Thomas/Save the Children

With the generous support of the Lego Group, investment from Save the Children International member organisations and domestic fundraising, Save the Children is pleased to offer our in-school recovery program, *Journey of Hope*, free of charge to eligible primary and secondary schools in communities affected by the devastating 2019-20 bushfires.

### Introduction

**When disasters strike, children are always the most vulnerable. That's why Save the Children stands ready to deploy; providing immediate psychosocial support and staying as long as it takes to help children and families recover from their losses, restore their lives and build their resilience for years to come.**

Save the Children is one of Australia's largest community development organisations dedicated to helping children. We've been working to change the story for vulnerable children, young people and families in Australia for over 65 years, with a standing workforce in all States and the Northern Territory. We do whatever it takes to keep kids safe, on track in their development and connected to community and culture.

In the immediate aftermath of disasters, we've been there to keep children safe and supported through our Child-Friendly Spaces in evacuation and relief centres. Already this season, we have scaled up in more than ten centres in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, supporting more than 1,000 children and young people in the immediate hours and days after evacuation from their homes and communities. At the request of local authorities, we are also mobilising to provide outreach psychosocial support in communities that have been hardest hit and where relief centres have closed.

## Needs of children in response and recovery

**More than half of those affected by emergencies are children, and crises can severely affect both their physical safety and emotional wellbeing.**

Tens of thousands of children in Australia have been directly impacted by the 2019/20 bushfires – with many evacuated from their homes and displaced, and many more affected by the pervasive smoke, with Australian cities reporting the worst air quality in the world this summer.<sup>1</sup>

Research confirms that without early intervention, children experiencing trauma may experience negative development effects that impact educational and functional outcomes later in life.<sup>2</sup> Studies<sup>3</sup> show that primary school children in bushfire affected areas demonstrated reduced academic progress compared with their peers two to four years after the event. Significant delays in progress in reading and numeracy have been observed in children who started school in the year prior to a moderate to major bushfire.

1 The Guardian, 'Canberra chokes on world's worst air quality as city all but shut down', <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/jan/03/canberra-chokes-on-worlds-worst-air-quality-as-city-all-but-shut-down>, 3 January 2020 (accessed 13 January 2020).

2 Goodman, Gail et al. "Trauma and Long-term Memory for Childhood Events: Impact Matters". Society for Research in Child Development. Vol 13 (1) 2019.

3 Gibbs, Lisa, et al. "Delayed Disaster Impacts on Academic Performance of Primary School Children". Child Development 90.4 (2019)



Photos: Reem Hasib/Save the Children

## Supporting children after disaster strikes – *Journey of Hope*

As the immediate emergency passes and families begin to rebuild their lives, Save the Children is committed to working with families and schools over the long haul to make sure children have the support they need to process what they've experienced and mitigate the long-term impacts of disaster.

We do this through our *Journey of Hope* in-school post-disaster recovery program, first implemented after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and developed with children and educators. Journey of Hope has since been delivered to more than 85,000 children in numerous countries, including an adaptation in New Zealand following the Christchurch earthquake.

*Journey of Hope* helps children and caregivers cope with collective trauma, identify triggers and stressors, develop their natural resilience and coping strategies, and strengthen their social support networks.

## *Journey of Hope* – Learning objectives

- 1 To support children in understanding and normalising emotions associated with traumatic stress;
- 2 To support children in developing positive coping strategies to deal with these emotions;
- 3 To build on the innate strengths of children, their families, schools and communities to further develop positive coping mechanisms;
- 4 To instil a sense of hope, empowering children to feel more in control over stressors.

## Program design

**Based in social cognitive theory<sup>4</sup>, *Journey of Hope* teaches children social and emotional skill building to promote self-efficacy, problem solving and positive coping so they may have the capacity to overcome current and future trauma<sup>5</sup>.**

The program is implemented by trained facilitators in small groups of up to ten students. Multiple student groups can be supported in the one school or region. Each student group works with the same facilitators over the duration of the program, with curriculum organised into eight one-hour sessions that can be implemented within a school term. For the older age groups, the program will be adapted into fewer sessions to enable easy integration into the existing curricula.

Every session is focused on a different aspect of recovery and follows a similar routine to create a safe place for students to participate in activities and share their feelings. The core content and structure are as follows:

**SESSION 1:** Introducing *Journey of Hope*  
– creating safety

**SESSION 2:** Understanding and coping – fear

**SESSION 3:** Understanding and coping – anxiety

**SESSION 4:** Understanding and coping – sadness

**SESSION 5:** Understanding and coping  
– anger and aggression

**SESSION 6:** Understanding and coping – bullying

**SESSION 7:** Self-esteem and taking action – I believe I can

**SESSION 8:** Me, My Emotions and My Community

The program uses experiential and reflective learning activities, including cooperative play, discussion and creative arts, to help children recognise and process common emotions, identify stressors and triggers, and build capacity to deal with those emotions<sup>6</sup>.

### **Activities are tailored for the four age-specific cohorts:**

- Early Years into Lower Primary – for children aged 4-7
- Middle Primary – for children aged 8-10
- Late Primary to Early High School – for young people aged 11-13
- Mid to late High School – for young people aged 14-18

When we enter a school or early education setting, our facilitators offer a workshop for teachers and parents so that caregivers understand the program and its objectives, have an opportunity to ask questions and contribute context to our delivery, and feel equipped to support their children as they progress through the eight-week curriculum.

4 Bandura. "Health promotion from the perspective of social cognitive theory". *Psychology and Health*. (1998)

5 Bandura. "Health promotion from the perspective of social cognitive theory". *Psychology and Health*. (1998)

6 Malekoff. "Transforming trauma and empowering children and adolescents in the aftermath of a disaster through group work." *Social Work with Groups* (2008).  
Salloum et al. "Grief and trauma group therapy for children after Hurricane Katrina". *Social Work with Groups*. (2009)

## Evidence-based results

Through rigorous evaluation, including by the International Institute for Children's Rights and Development, *Journey of Hope* improves student social and emotional well-being as well as knowledge and skills<sup>7</sup>, by:

- Teaching children to recognise and manage their emotions, which builds confidence, self-esteem, and "I believe I can" attitudes.
- Developing positive peer relationships, which help children experience a collaborative environment based on respect and understanding.
- Reducing disruptive behaviours, which supports more concentrated learning in class.

7 Blanchet-Cohen & Nelems, "Journey of Hope (JoH) Curriculum: Building Children's and Communities' Resilience". International Institute for Child Rights and Development (2009)

In 2011, *Journey of Hope* was brought to Christchurch, New Zealand in response to the ongoing challenges faced by communities in the aftermath of severe earthquakes. An external review of New Zealand's *Journey of Hope* program, conducted by University of Texas, found that the adapted *Journey of Hope* curricula had a positive impact on two key populations:

- 1. For children and young people, participation reduced emotional distress and enhanced overall well-being, emotional regulation and awareness**
- 2. For caregivers, the curriculum enhanced knowledge about types and sources of stress and positive coping strategies, and increased knowledge of social support and positivity about the future.<sup>8</sup>**

8 Powell, "Journey of Hope Curricula: Building Children's and Communities' Resilience". The University of Texas (2011)



I learned a bit more about my feelings. That if or when I want to talk about my feelings, I can talk about them – it still makes me feel better now.

– Secondary student, Canterbury, NZ



Since doing Journey of Hope, my two girls have finally moved back into their own beds after sleeping with me for two years since the earthquakes started.

– Mother, Freeville Primary, Canterbury, NZ

## A flexible and adaptable model

We are committed to ensuring that our service response in emergencies is well-coordinated and responsive to the needs and priorities of individual schools and communities. We've designed our approach to delivery to complement existing social-emotional supports being offered in schools. By working directly with students, the model reduces pressure on educators to directly deliver specialist content in an already crowded curriculum. By delivering in group settings, the program encourages students to build positive peer relationships and learn how to support the coping skills of one another and allows facilitators to identify those children who may benefit from further support such as 1:1 counselling.

Depending on the needs and established timetable of each school and its students, *Journey of Hope* sessions can be provided once a week for eight consecutive weeks, twice a week for four consecutive weeks or otherwise by arrangement. Program facilitators are equipped to respond to a diverse range of coping levels to ensure those who struggle can learn from those coping better.

In this way, *Journey of Hope* is able to accommodate the educational and psychosocial needs of students returning to school after prolonged absences as a result of disasters and align with different school and community visions for local recovery.

## Working with schools

With education as one of our global breakthroughs, Save the Children Australia is highly experienced in collaborating with schools and educators to deliver impactful in-school interventions that support and complement existing school strategies, structures and systems.

Our flagship education model, Hands on Learning, has been delivered successfully in schools for over 20 years, providing targeted early intervention for students in Years 5-10 who have typically experienced bullying or difficulty learning in the classroom. The model focuses on ensuring young people's connection to schools is fostered, their capacities and skills are developed, and they gain confidence and meaning from what they do at school. Through Hands on Learning, we hold partnerships with over 100 primary and secondary schools in Victoria, NSW, Queensland and Tasmania.

*"It's the structure, method and training that's behind it that makes Hands on Learning so successful. We have been able to pick it up and run with it immediately. The reflective practice at the beginning and end of the day gives students the opportunity to reflect on what they have achieved. HoL Primary allows you to have quick wins every day you do it – it's a brilliant program. I'd love to run a whole school like this, that would be my dream, that's how powerful Hands on Learning is."*

**Jodi May, Principal, Heywood Consolidated School**

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