# Australia's Bushfires and Mental Health - Communication principles and resources

*The widespread bushfires have impacted the entire nation and will have considerable impacts on the mental health of Australians. As we work together to support communities through the recovery process it will be important to have a clear communication plan and some agreed key messages. The National Mental Health Commission have put together some guiding principles that may be helpful in framing communications online and with your stakeholders.*

## Guiding Principles for Communications

o It is important to acknowledge the widespread impacts that the bushfires are having on those directly affected and for many people across the country

o Sharing that it is natural for people who are not directly affected to also feel overwhelmed and sad

o Encourage people to look after themselves and reach out to those around them, validating the important role of communities and compassionate responses to any distress

o Reinforce that the immediate priorities are to ensure those affected get basic needs met such as safety and security – these are important foundations of an effective longer term response

o Ensure as a mental health and suicide prevention sector, that people are following the advice of those with expertise in disaster recovery and sign post where people can get access to evidence-based information about support after a disaster (please see link below)

o Acknowledge the strength and resilience of our communities and the outpouring of care, concern and support to date

o Include help seeking information on all communications for people to access support when they need it

## Mental Health Resources and Information

o In times of crisis, it can be hard for people to know where to look for help. The Life in Mind team at Everymind has developed a webpage where relevant disaster toolkits, resources, helplines and information can be found. This will be updated on an ongoing basis to ensure the information remains relevant to each phase and meets community needs. Visit: https://www.lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/mental-health-support-for-bushfire-affected-communities