

PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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Communities across regional Victoria are dealing with a devastating emotional and practical toll from recent bushfires and floods, with children often the forgotten victims as families struggle with getting their lives back on track.

With an estimated 1.4 million Australian children and young people experiencing a disaster or extreme weather event in an average year and with significant impacts on mental health, education, and housing stability, the need for responsive, community-led support has never been more urgent.

Mackillop Seasons' [Stormbirds program](#)—which has supported over 10,000 Australian and New Zealand children and young people impacted by bushfires, floods, storms, cyclones and earthquakes—is playing a critical role in helping schools and communities rebuild resilience and wellbeing.

“As families navigate loss, displacement, disruption and uncertainty, it is vital that the building blocks for community recovery are started as soon as possible,” says Stormbirds National Lead, Brooke Nester.

The [Stormbirds program](#) is an evidence-based small group intervention designed specifically to support children and young people after natural disasters.

Supported through the Australian Government's **Disaster Ready Fund**, Stormbirds provides **fully funded professional learning and training** in the Mackillop Seasons suite of programs, building local capacity to support children, young people and adults experiencing grief, loss and change.

Long-lasting impacts on children

Following climate related disasters, children often experience heightened anxiety, difficulty concentrating, behavioural changes, challenges regulating emotions, and worries about their own and their family's future. Stormbirds creates a safe space where children can process these experiences, understand their emotions, and develop strategies to manage worries, stress and change.

Trauma responses can persist long after the immediate danger has passed. With the right support, however, educators see transformational change. “When we give the kids the right support, they fly,” one NSW school principal commented after the school had engaged with the Stormbirds program.

Supporting emotional expression and shared experience

Teachers and educators delivering Stormbirds consistently report that the program helps children name and understand their feelings, recognise shared experiences, and develop practical coping strategies.

Children also learn that they can cope with big emotions through practical steps like walking the dog, talking to family members or playing with siblings - simple, everyday strategies that significantly support wellbeing.

A vital resource for Victorian communities now

Stormbirds National Lead, Brooke Nester, says recent disasters in Victoria have reinforced the importance of trauma informed, evidence-based support for children and young people; “Research shows that longer term, school based social and emotional learning programs significantly mitigate the mental health impacts of disaster exposure.

“Stormbirds equips educators and communities with the knowledge, tools and confidence to support children as they process grief, loss and change. It also helps identify students who may require additional support, while strengthening communication within families and broader community networks,” added Ms. Nester.

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About Stormbirds

[Stormbirds](#) is an award winning, research informed program developed by [MacKillop Seasons](#). It supports children and young people to understand and manage the impact of natural disasters and significant life changes by offering a structured, safe environment to share experiences and learn constructive coping strategies.



Australian Government



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