

## **Successful pilot program means we are more resilient and prepared**

The Community Resilience and Readiness pilot program for bushfire affected communities has increased the psychological and practical preparedness of many Adelaide Hills residents for future disasters.

Funded by Country SA PHN, as part of the Australian Government mental health response to bushfire trauma, the program supports Adelaide Hills and other bushfire affected communities to increase their resilience and emotional preparedness.

The idea germinated when Adelaide Hills Community Resilience Officer (CRO), Miranda Hampton was working with hills bushfire affected communities and identified gaps in people’s practical and psychological preparedness. Miranda could see the benefits of building a resilient community – one that is emotionally and mentally prepared to face future disasters, rather than just react to them.

Country SA PHN’s Bushfire Response Coordinator, Sally Patten, agreed and collaborated with Miranda to make the CRO program a reality. Country SA PHN funded seven CROs in a further three recently affected bushfire communities, in the state’s South-East, Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

“We’ve been very pleased to fund and support the development of such an important community capacity building initiative,” said Country SA PHN, Chief Executive Officer, Mark Hartigan.

“To be able to assist communities to face inevitable future challenges with resilience and preparedness provides communities with a great sense of empowerment and ultimately improved future outcomes.”

Miranda and fellow Adelaide Hills CRO, Sue Thomas, have been working with bushfire affected hills communities to build their resilience and emotional preparedness.

“Strong relationships between councils, agencies, service providers and our communities are crucial if we are to become more prepared for future disasters,” said Miranda.

“The funding for our pilot Community Readiness and Resilience Program has allowed us to build these strong relationships, have the time and space to listen and learn from recent bushfire experiences and make meaningful change possible – allowing us to plan for the future with our community.”

**Adelaide Hills Community Resilience and Readiness program highlights:**

- Working with parents and caregivers in bushfire affected area to discuss how to prepare children for future emergencies
- Working with first responder volunteers – covering topics such as self-care and how to support their families
- Providing a longer-term point of contact for the community to provide relevant recovery information, including how to access local mental health services
- Supporting the formation of the Adelaide Hills Community Action Bushfire Network – connecting communities and agencies across three local government areas in the hills, to share information about recovery and bushfire preparedness
- Supporting three townships (Charleston, Woodside, and Lenswood) through the Australian Red Cross Community Led Emergency Resilience workshops, in which communities identify their unique needs, strengths and solutions to become more prepared for future emergencies
- Coordinating community events such as Mental Health First Aid and the sold-out Women’s, Wisdom, and Wellbeing evening

“It is recognised that traditionally, bushfire preparedness has primarily focused on physical preparedness, but psychological preparation can help to reduce or manage the potential mental and emotional impacts of a bushfire,” said Miranda.

It’s hoped that the pilot program’s success will be continued through the National Recovery and Resilience Agency.

**-ENDS-**

To find out more about the Community Resilience Program you can email Miranda at: [mhampton@ahc.sa.gov.au](mailto:mhampton@ahc.sa.gov.au)

If this story has raised personal concern, please contact:

For **immediate medical assistance in an emergency** always call **Triple Zero (000)** and ask for the ambulance.

***Mental Health Triage Service***

For **non-life-threatening mental health emergencies**, phone the **24/7 Mental Health Triage Service** 13 14 65.

***Lifeline (24 hours)***

Phone 13 11 14 for immediate support

Lifeline online counselling (6.30 to 11.30 pm, South Australian time)

***Head2Health***

For counselling support call the National **Head to Health** phone line - 1800 595 212.

***Kids Helpline (24 hours)***

Free counselling for people aged five to 25.

Phone 1800 55 1800 or get help online from Kids Helpline online counselling