

Post Drought & Fire Mental Health First Aid

Manning Landcare Incorporated

Trauma Release Exercises - bringing coping skills to a community ravaged by drought & fire.

The issue

The latter part of 2019 was extremely tough on the Mid North Coast of NSW. The drought dragged from spring into summer.

Our normally lush, green landscape was crisp & brown. Farm dams & waterways dried up, household tanks emptied with long waits for water carters. Vegetation on ridges died. Landholders needed to make decisions to feed stock or destock. The price of feed skyrocketed, the price of stock plummeted.

In October & November while our people and systems were already battered our area came under attack by the worst fires in living memory.

I'm not able to adequately explain the immense impact on the natural and built environments. 123 houses were lost, hundreds of thousands of hectares burnt. Firefighters in local brigades spent weeks on fire grounds supported by an army of volunteers with homemade watertankers, meals & supplies.

The solution

During the damage assessments & initial cleanups, community members & volunteers were again stretched to the limit handling donations, finding accommodation, managing straying stock, clearing fallen trees, damaged buildings and fencing.

People in our small community were stretched, stressed and emotional.

Our Landcare group discussed practical methods of helping relieve the burden on members of our community, children included.

Trauma Release Exercises were offered as a suggestion by our Landcare Co-ordinator as an inclusive activity that may be suitable.

The first class was offered for free on our community Facebook page with potential participants encouraged to respond confidentially by messenger. The class was restricted to fifteen participants with a trainer & support person in attendance.

The impact

Our first class ran in the local hall with a class full of expectant, some nervous, participants. The trainer took people through a guided, gentle journey, with explanations, exercises and handouts to future reference.

The exercises were so well received that a second session was requested.

This second session included several parents and their children.

The feedback from the sessions was extremely positive and gave participants exposure to new techniques in dealing with stress.



Key facts

- Community mental & physical health initiatives come in many different guises.

Project Partners



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