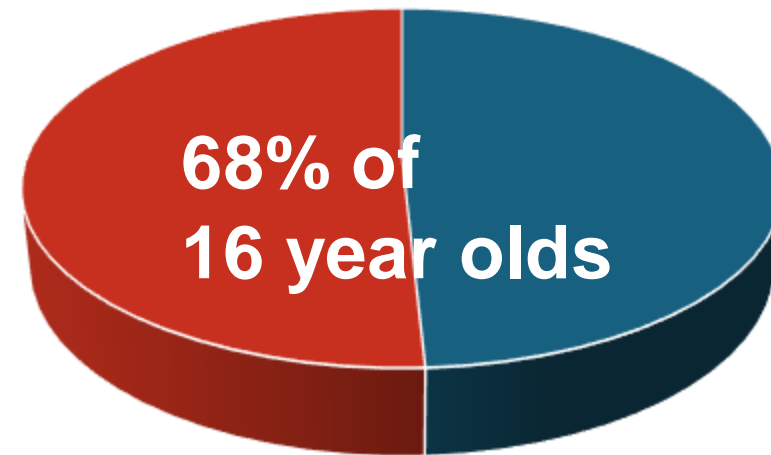
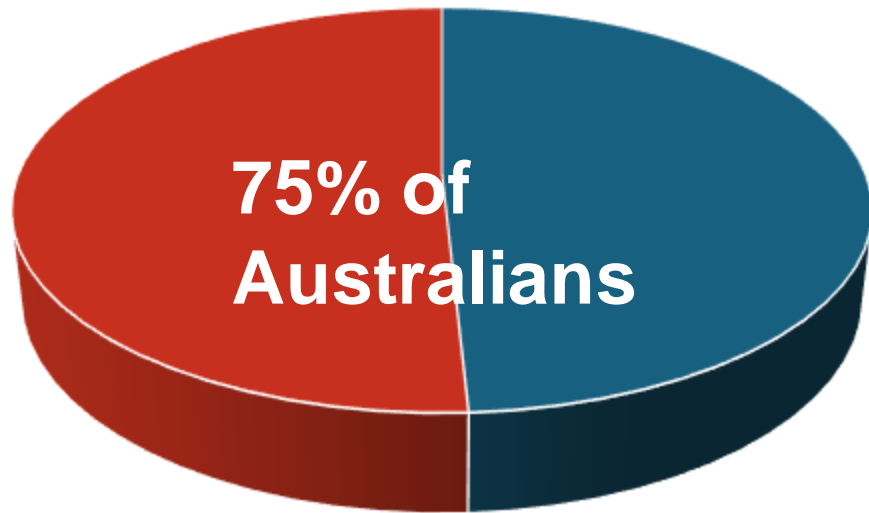


Bushfire Trauma Preparation and Recovery

Who has experienced a potentially traumatic event?



10-15%

Experienced a
natural disaster

Impacts of disaster

- Generates high emotions (fear, sadness, anger)
- Often shatters (or challenges) basic assumptions about the world, other people, ourselves; the old “rules” no longer apply
- Often subsequent stressors (e.g., financial, rebuilding, legal, climate, possible recurrence)
- Recovery is a long process with fluctuations
- May result in a range of individual, group/family, community effects

Normal individual reactions

- **Feelings:** Fear, anxiety, sadness, guilt, anger
- **Physical:** Tense, jumpy, sleep, appetite, pain
- **Behaviour:** Withdrawal, substance use, risks
- **Thoughts:** Memories, worry, concentration, decision-making
- Impact on social and occupational functioning

Impacts 3-4 years post-fires



Other impacts

- Parenting was compromised
 - Low tolerance/frustration
 - Not having time (or not being present)
 - Not having the answers
 - Not able to make it better
- Experiencing other major life stressors contributed to mental health impacts of fires
- Anger – can be both a motivator and a barrier to recovery, and tends to be influenced by the social context and service provider response
- Gendered experience of violence post-disaster
- Involvement in local community groups associated with more positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes

Interpersonal impacts

- Strained relationships
- One family member's distress will impact on everybody in the family
- Distress impedes communication with others
- Trying to cope with distress can make people irritable and lash out at those who are trying to help
- **BUT the level of social support is the biggest predictor for recovery**

Prevalence of PTSD

Beyond Blue Ltd. (2018). Answering the call national survey, National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services – Final report.

- **Emergency workers have higher rates of psychological distress and PTSD than the general population**
- General population – 4.4% (Australia)
- Fire and Rescue – 9%
- Ambulance Personnel – 8%
- Police Officers – 11%
- SES – 6%
- 21% of emergency service workers have **high** psychological distress, compared to 8% in general community
- 9% of ES have **very high** psychological distress
- ES employees and volunteers have higher rates of suicidal thoughts (5% & 6%) than general population (2%).

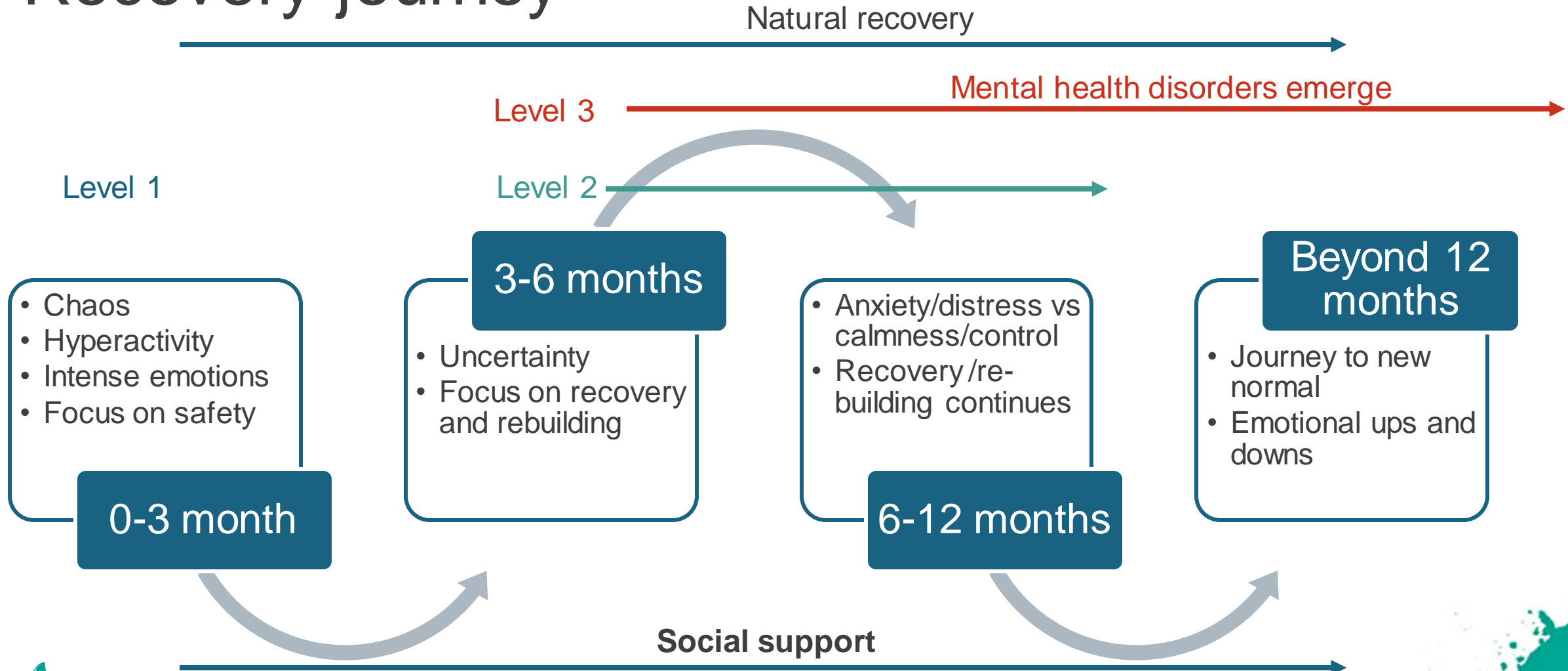
Levels of intervention post-disaster

Level 3: Specialist mental health providers
(reserved for low prevalence, serious conditions)

Level 2: Primary care providers
(for medium prevalence, moderate severity)

Level 1: Self-care and community support
(for high prevalence, low severity)

Recovery journey




Can we prevent problems?

- Limited evidence on prevention and early intervention strategies
- BUT developing mentally healthy communities and workplaces, improving mental health literacy and promoting individual resilience are strategies endorsed by experts.

Phoenix Australia resources

- Resources for health practitioners, emergency services workers and first responders and community members
- www.phoenixaustralia.org



The screenshot shows the Phoenix Australia website. At the top is the logo and navigation links: FIND HELP, DONATE, COURSES, NEWS ROOM. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: EXPERTISE, RECOVERY, FOR PRACTITIONERS, FOR ORGANISATIONS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS, ABOUT. The main content area has an orange header with the text 'Resources' and 'Australian Bushfires'. Below this is a photograph of a bushfire at night with a firefighter visible. The text below the photo reads 'Australian bushfires mental health resources'. At the bottom, a small paragraph states: 'The Australian bushfires have caused emotional distress among thousands of people who were impacted directly or indirectly. While for most people the distress will only last a few'.

Phoenix AUSTRALIA

FIND HELP DONATE COURSES NEWS ROOM

EXPERTISE RECOVERY FOR PRACTITIONERS FOR ORGANISATIONS RESOURCES & PROGRAMS ABOUT

Resources

Australian Bushfires

Australian bushfires mental health resources

The Australian bushfires have caused emotional distress among thousands of people who were impacted directly or indirectly. While for most people the distress will only last a few



The screenshot shows a resource titled 'Tips for leaders' for Australian bushfires. It features the Phoenix Australia logo and a blue background with a wavy pattern. The text below the title reads 'Managing a workplace or organisation impacted by disaster'. At the bottom, a paragraph states: 'Disasters that impact the workplace, whether natural or human-made, may create an unusual set of challenges for leaders and managers. You and your team of staff and volunteers may experience emotional stress, physical injury, grief and disruption of normal routines. At the same time, the team may face new'.

AUSTRALIAN BUSHFIRES

Tips for leaders

Phoenix AUSTRALIA

Managing a workplace or organisation impacted by disaster

Disasters that impact the workplace, whether natural or human-made, may create an unusual set of challenges for leaders and managers. You and your team of staff and volunteers may experience emotional stress, physical injury, grief and disruption of normal routines. At the same time, the team may face new



Bushfire Recovery Project

Trauma-related training for emergency service
and general practice staff



Project overview

- As part of the Australian Government's Mental Health Supports for Bushfire Affected Australians package, Phoenix Australia will deliver training to frontline workers to help them better support community members and their colleagues.
- This project aims to work with Emergency Services personnel and General Practice staff to enhance their ability to:
 - Support community members recovery from bushfires
 - Promote their own resilience and psychological recovery from the bushfires
 - Support the resilience and wellbeing of their teams and organisations

Key training programs for the Emergency Services sector

1. **Psychological First Aid (PFA)** training programs to managers and supervisors of frontline emergency personnel
2. **Trauma Informed Care (TIC)** resources and training for emergency service workers and volunteers

To register your interest for the training:

www.phoenixaustralia.org/resources/bushfire-recovery