



THE BUSHFIRE & RESILIENCE PROJECT (BRRP) - PHASE 2 PROPOSAL



Children With Additional Needs
Working Group



Where it all
STARTED

The Bushfire Recovery & Resilience Project (BRRP), which was funded by the Bushfire Recovery Victoria (Local Economic Recovery Round 1), provided specific support services to families with children with additional needs.

The communities that were supported include Orbost, Buchan, Cann River, and Mallacoota, with smaller roles in Lakes Entrance, Bairnsdale and Sarsfield.

The project was enabled through the support of the Children with Additional Needs Working Group (CWANWG).

The project had three key outcomes:

1. Build the capacity of parents/carers of Children with Additional Needs across East Gippsland;
2. Map and document pathways for children/families in ways that are easy to understand and
3. Improve feedback from children and families to improve support services

The project runs from 1 May 2021 until 7 July 2022.

The BRRP has achieved many successes and gathered much information to assist families/carers looking after children with additional needs.

At a workshop held in December 2021, the BRRP Project Lead identified highlights and 'achievements' of the project for the members of the Children with Additional Needs Working Group.



Over 350 meetings held	Bespoke NDIS training developed and run	Partnerships and linkages established across East Gippsland
14 Service Provider interviews undertaken	Over 400 Person-centered Emergency Planning Books distributed in collaboration with VALID and GDAI	Social media presence connecting families to assistance
Connections with Moogji and Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust	Support Worker model created in Mallacoota	10 family stories collected and written up
Sensitive Santa (14 f2f and 6 online)	Planned Burning Social Story developed in collaboration with DELWP and a private speech service provider	Workshops and engagement with CWANWG
Emergency Management Reform Project Discussion Paper and summary	Communications Analysis	Website development at 'in principle' support with Children's Wellbeing Collective'
Sensitive Santa evaluation	NDIS Bespoke training Evaluation	Social Story - Covid Vaccination

Sensitive Santa	Monthly meetings are rich in information	Strategic connections - Disability Advocacy Committee (EGSC)
Info sessions Mallacoota- NDIS	Getting to small/remote communities	Funding for OT sessions in Mallacoota & Cann River, including with medical and school staff to assist with recovery
Promoting work on social media/ and print media coverage	2 families identified for pathway to the Royal Disability Commission	Voices of community-parents and service providers heard
Getting service provider list and questions to ask	One stop shop- education/ school readiness info	Link to Parks Victoria
Submissions to NDIS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NDIS reform - Disability act - Price arrangements Parks Victoria and Victorian Disability plan	Strengthen network for voices and families	

Key achievements then complimented the list by contributions from the CWANWG members:



SO WHAT'S NEXT?

This Emergency Management Reform Project has emerged from the issues identified through the Children with Additional Needs Working Group as one of its top 2 priorities.

The Emergency Management Reform Project Discussion Paper specifically discusses feedback received from families and service providers across East Gippsland and highlights the challenges and opportunities which presented during and after the Black Summer Fires.

As a result of the feedback from families in East Gippsland, key projects have now been identified as **priorities** to seek resourcing to implement. These include:

- Preparedness Planning through Person-Centered Emergency Planning
- Capacity building for Emergency Responders through a working group
- Safer refuge/relief centres for families and carers of children with additional needs
- Pathways to recovery by establishing a strong community of practice with private service providers and looking at the way funding is granted
- Accommodation Project – seeking alternative accommodation arrangements and identifying a key lead
- Application of the Vulnerable Person's Register through the East Gippsland Region during the Black Summer fires.

The stories from families and services require a genuine commitment and funding for everyone involved in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. It should be noted that many of these experiences can and should be considered across all emergencies/hazards.

The impacts of the 2019-20 bushfires and COVID demands us to listen to communities and have a willingness to actively deliver on what we are being told by families and service providers. This is our opportunity to understand our obligation to follow through on the recommendations and actions for us to be prepared for future disasters, particularly for families with children with additional needs.



FOR NOTING

As a result of a Workshop with the Children with Additional Needs Working Group members, eight key areas were highlighted and prioritised from the tables of information collected from families and service providers.

These priorities include:

1. Continue funding Bushfire Recovery and Resilience Role
2. Actions and Emergency Response strategies to be implemented to support wellbeing during emergencies (combined with number 10 priority – Emergency Response Reform)
3. Consultation/Audit Forum – Share evidence-based information collected
4. To have a process supported that designs a system of support for the future
5. NDIS – how to access, use it and thin markets
6. Diagnostic pathways
7. Department of Education and Training to improve inclusion and transition
8. Develop better communication methods

It is important to note that there are still many areas from evidence collected that require further investigation. These can be made available on request. The top eight priorities have now been worked into smaller discreet projects and the CWANWG are now seeking funding to progress through grant applications.



NEXT STEPS

The original application to BRV sought \$350K over three years to cover off this key piece of work. Out of the original request, BRV supported three outcomes which are on track to be delivered on time and within budget.

The key priority “Emergency Management Reform Project” (as identified by the CWANWG) forms the basis of the request to seek funding to resource the key activities and is informed by families/carers and service providers’ experiences through the Black Summer Fires.

Future grants will be sought to cover other projects as identified by the CWANWG.