



A message from  
**Coordinator-General  
Office for Mental Health  
and Wellbeing**



06 Jan 2020

These last few weeks have been a testing time for Australia.

As the smoke haze from surrounding bushfires waxes and wanes in Canberra many people have been asking me for more information about how to support themselves and their communities.

Feeling anxious at this time is normal and it is important to acknowledge this. Taking action to take care of yourself and your family and friends can help to relieve some of the distress.

It is important to be prepared as far as possible and there is important information on the Emergency Services Agency website: <https://esa.act.gov.au/>

Australians are renowned at supporting each other during difficult times, and as Canberrans we can work together to support each other and the surrounding communities.

Simple things can really help right now such as spending time with and getting support from (and giving support to) your family, friends and other people as well as talking about how you are feeling.

Keeping to routines as much as possible is important and paying attention to basic self-care such as eating healthy and trying to maintain good sleep patterns can be helpful.

Explore indoor facilities or opportunities that support your wellbeing. Focus on possible opportunities to support others in our community. This might be as simple as getting to know your neighbours or reaching out to people in your neighbourhood.

This can be a challenging time for children and parents. Caregivers may find the following resources helpful: <https://emergingminds.com.au/resources/toolkits/community-trauma-toolkit/> The toolkit offers practical advice from preparedness to recovery.

Update to information on the current state is available via the ESA website: <https://esa.act.gov.au/> or ESA's social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the emergency services personnel and volunteers supporting our communities during this difficult time.

Lifeline provides a free, 24-hour Telephone Crisis Support service in Australia. Volunteer Crisis Supporters provide suicide prevention services, mental health support and emotional assistance on 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au>. Deaf Canberrans can contact Lifeline's Text Service on **0477 13 11 14**.