

INTRODUCTION

In Australia we are accustomed to floods, storms, fires, cyclones and prolonged drought. Occasionally, severe disasters occur and can catch even the most conscientious and well-prepared people off-guard. Lives and property can be lost with little warning, causing a great deal of heartache and suffering.

Immediately after a serious disaster, a person may experience a range of thoughts, feelings and behaviour that can be intense, confusing and frightening. These are common reactions to an extraordinary situation. Most people recover after disasters by drawing on their own strengths and the support of others, and most will gradually rebuild their lives and achieve a sense of wellbeing again. However, some people may go on to develop a psychological problem. It's important to know the difference between a normal reaction to a stressful or potentially traumatic event and the signs that indicate you should seek additional assistance.

This booklet is for adults and is designed to help you understand the reactions you – or someone you know – may be experiencing. It contains practical advice, numbers to call and websites to visit if you need extra information or support.

Following a disaster, it's important to remember that **you are not alone** and that **help is available**.

