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Special support for Victorian families

With the anniversary of the bushfires that devastated Victoria last February looming, Kids Helpline is reminding the community it is crucial that children and families are provided with support.

Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said overcoming such significant stress and trauma takes time and it is crucial children are provided with acceptance, encouragement and support.

“Milestones such as anniversaries can cause children and young people additional grief and anxiety,” she said.

To help parents support their children during this difficult time, Kids Helpline is offering special counselling services to Victorian families.

“We usually provide telephone and online counselling to children and young people aged 5 to 25 years,” Ms Protheroe said.

“However, we are working with the Federal Government to ensure those families affected by the bushfires receive all the support they need, by making our counsellors available to provide education, support and counselling to parents as well.”

Kids Helpline is available 24 hours a day, with trained and experienced counsellors ready to help Victorians continue to heal from the tragedy.

“Our counsellors are tertiary qualified, specifically trained in grief, loss and trauma, and experienced at supporting both children and families,” Ms Protheroe said.

“In the first six months of 2009, more than 7,000 contacts were made about mental health, emotional issues or grief and loss.

“One eight year-old boy called about losing his cousin to the fires, questioning how something this horrible could happen.”

Counsellors can help parents who, along with their children, may be having difficulty coming to terms with what happened, experiencing ongoing feelings of grief and loss, or dealing with mental health issues, long-term physical or emotional issues and family break down.

“We can provide advice on how to manage unexpected problems, how to help when a child is sad, withdrawn, grieving or having trouble at school,” Ms Protheroe said.

“Kids Helpline is committed to helping Victorian families to recover and continue to rebuild their lives.”

Counselling is available at free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelp.com.au.

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