

Support for Communities Affected by Violent or Distressing Events



Violent or distressing events can affect whole communities, not only individuals who were directly involved. After such events, it is common for communities to experience fear, uncertainty, and a reduced sense of safety — particularly when incidents relate to identity, faith, culture, or trigger memories of past experiences of violence or persecution.

These impacts may be felt differently across community members, including elders, young people, families, and community leaders.

Common community-level responses

IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS FOLLOWING A VIOLENT EVENT, COMMUNITIES MAY EXPERIENCE:

- heightened fear or anxiety within the community
- people withdrawing from public or community spaces
- increased concern for children and young people
- tension, confusion, or uncertainty about safety
- resurfacing of past trauma or collective memories of violence
- increased pressure on community leaders and organisations

These responses are common after a violent incident or significant humanitarian event and reflect the impact of trauma at a community level.

Healing often happens through connection, shared meaning and collective support.

How communities can support one another

Communities often already have strong ways of caring for their members.

THE FOLLOWING APPROACHES CAN HELP REDUCE HARM AND SUPPORT RECOVERY:

- staying connected and checking in on one another
- creating safe spaces for people to talk or gather, if they wish
- sharing clear, calm information and avoiding rumours
- being mindful of repeated sharing of distressing news or images
- paying particular attention to children, young people, elders, and those who may be isolated
- recognising that community leaders may also need support
- speaking with police if the community is concerned about their safety at anytime

There is no single correct response. Communities recover in different ways and at different speeds.

FASSTT SUPPORT IS:

- Free and confidential
- Available in every Australian state and territory, regardless of how long someone has been in Australia
- Provided by specialist trauma services
- Available in your preferred language, through the use of interpreters

When additional support may be helpful

EXTRA SUPPORT MAY BE NEEDED WHEN:

- fear or distress is widespread or increasing within the community
- people stop attending community activities or public spaces
- children or young people show ongoing distress or behavioural changes
- community leaders feel overwhelmed or unsure how to respond
- past trauma appears to be strongly reactivated

Early support can help prevent longer-term impacts and reduce pressure on communities.

Specialist trauma support for communities

FASSTT (Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma) is a national network of specialist trauma recovery services that works with individuals, families, and communities affected by violence, persecution, and traumatic events.

FASSTT AGENCIES CAN SUPPORT COMMUNITIES BY:

- providing specialist trauma counselling and group support
- working alongside community leaders and organisations
- offering guidance on trauma-informed community responses
- supporting children and young people
- helping communities stay connected and reduce isolation

How to access support

You can contact the FASSTT agency in your state or territory by phone or email. Agency contact details are available on the FASSTT website: www.fasstt.org.au

You can also access support by calling the **Witness to War Telephone Line** on **1800 845 198 (free call)**.

If someone is in immediate danger or at risk of harming themselves or others, call **000**.

ASETTS (WA)

P: 08 9227 2700
asetts.org.au

COMPANION HOUSE (ACT)

P: 02 6251 4550
companionhouse.org.au

FOUNDATION HOUSE (VIC)

P: 03 9389 8900
foundationhouse.org.au

MELALEUCA AUSTRALIA (NT)

P: 08 8985 3311
melaleuca.org.au

QPASTT (QLD)

P: 07 3391 6677
qpastt.org.au

PHOENIX CENTRE (TAS)

P: 03 6234 9138
mrctas.org.au/phoenix-centre

STARTTS (NSW)

P: 02 9794 1900
startts.org

STTARS (SA)

P: 08 8206 8900
sttars.org.au

