



DISASTER EVENTS

AND SUPPORT FOR PERSONS *WITH*
DEMENTIA

*A guide for caravan park operators and community
volunteers to increase the resilience of our
communities when faced with a disaster event*



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS
COUNCIL



Edmund Barton Centre
for business excellence

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Providing disaster event preparedness support for persons living with dementia



A guide for caravan park operators and community volunteers



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ABOUT.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to

- Keep persons with dementia and cognitive impairment safe and supported during a disaster
- Guide caravan park staff and community volunteers to timely resources and contacts
- Improve overall preparedness of caravan park communities with a permanent resident population

WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

- Caravan park managers/operators
- Caravan park employees
- Residents' family members and carers
- Not-for-profits, Community Managed Organisations (CMOs) and volunteers assisting with preparedness during and after a disaster event and supporting throughout the recovery phase
- Healthcare workers

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK?

The handbook provides information, advice and resources so it's easier to help persons living with dementia who reside in caravan parks before, during and after a disaster event.

WHY THIS HANDBOOK WAS DEVELOPED

The Port-Macquarie Hastings region experienced two natural disasters and a worldwide pandemic within two years. The 2019 bush fires, 2021 floods and the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected and impacted residents in the region and were especially difficult for vulnerable adults.

WHO DEVELOPED THIS HANDBOOK?

The Port Macquarie Dementia Friendly Community together with Ritchie Villages (a caravan park operator) applied for a council community grant to develop these resources and to assist caravan parks.



The following organisations offered input and advice to create this resource.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, NOT-FOR-PROFITS AND CMOs:

- National Recovery and Resilience Agency
- NSW Health
- Midcoast Connect
- Australian Red Cross
- St Agnes Parish
- Garden Village
- Leslie Williams MP
- Fire & Rescue NSW
- Lifeline
- Caravan and Camping Industry Association (NSW)
- Professional Development Australia Pty Ltd

CARAVAN PARKS IN THE PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS REGION INCLUDES:

- Diamond Waters Caravan Park
- Dunbogan Caravan Park
- Brigadoon Caravan Park
- Haven Caravan Park
- Leisure Caravan Park
- Reflections North Haven
- Riverside Caravan Park

A BIG THANK YOU TO THE EDMUND BARTON CENTRE FOR AUSPICING THIS PROJECT

HOW TO PREPARE

BEFORE A DISASTER

Prepare now. It's the best time to understand what steps you need to take during a disaster and not wait until a disaster is looming. The NSW Midcoast floods of 2021 came fast and most residents throughout the region had less than an hour to evacuate. The Black Summer Bushfires in 2019/20 saw some residents choose not to evacuate despite the danger.

INFORMATION NEEDED IN AN EMERGENCY AND RESPECTING AN INDIVIDUAL'S PRIVACY

Balancing an individual's privacy and freedom of choice with providing a safe and supportive community is challenging. Address privacy-related issues early. Organising the following now means the disaster action plan can be used more effectively.

- Seek details of emergency contacts for residents
- Obtain appropriate consent to use this information
- If comfortable for both parties, ask whether the resident is happy to provide their ACAT assessment numbers and NDIS references numbers and contact details of their GP, as well as a list of medication, that can be provided to ambulance personnel in an emergency
- Ensure personal and sensitive information obtained is stored securely
- Remind residents to have a back-up plan to avoid loss of records
- Implement a process that regularly updates this information

If you don't already have an organisational form to capture this information, encourage residents to fill out the Red Cross' Emergency RediPlan or an Advanced Care Plan. Encourage the resident to provide a copy of this plan for use in an emergency, along with a signed consent form, to the caravan park operator.



It is common for elderly residents living in caravan parks to have undiagnosed dementia or cognitive impairments.

Many caravan park residents don't have family living nearby to help in an emergency.



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

If your life is in danger, call 000

Bushfire Information Line

1800 679 737

SES 132 500

NSW Trustee & Guardian

1300 109 290

Professional Development Australia Pty Ltd

1300 034 154

HOW TO PREPARE **BEFORE A DISASTER**

WHAT YOU CAN (SHOULD) DO NOW

1. Train staff to recognise signs of cognitive impairment
2. Create or update your park's emergency contact list every 12 months
3. Use dementia-friendly signage
4. Conduct a dementia audit of your park
5. Download the Fires Near Me app and set up alerts
6. Review your park's emergency preparedness plan and make sure the following is included:
 - A list of residents who require additional assistance, including their site number
 - A list of residents with known or suspected memory loss
 - A list of family or emergency contacts
 - Create lanyards or source hospital-like armbands for person
 - Host a morning tea to deliver disaster preparedness sessions in partnership with the Red Cross, RFS, Fire and Rescue and the SES



HOW TO ACCESS AGED CARE ASSESSMENT TEAM (ACAT)

The ACAT and NDIS processes are challenging to access and waiting times are long. Partnering with a local not-for-profit specialising in in-home care is a good way to access helpful resources. These organisations can help navigate the system so individuals get proper care at the right time as waiting times can become a big issue.



An example of how Garden Village has sourced care early and can enable continuity of care as more is required

Beryl is an 83 year old lady living at home by herself. Beryl's sight and her ability to clean and look after herself is deteriorating.

The Garden Village Home Care Coordinator became aware of Beryl's situation and met with Beryl and commenced a Home Care Application to assist Beryl.

Beryl was approved for a Level 3 Home Care Package within the month which is unusual, as it can take up to 12 months for approval.

Since approval, Beryl has gained assistance with her medication, personal care, cleaning, shopping, social outings and visits to the doctor. Beryl's Home Care package can develop over time if her health deteriorates.

WHAT TO DO

DURING A DISASTER

During a disaster, the first few days are critical. Use this guide to better help residents with dementia and memory loss. It's important to delegate tasks to key volunteers who understand the steps you've developed.

DURING A DISASTER, DO YOUR BEST TO REMAIN CALM AND FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO HELP VULNERABLE RESIDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE MEMORY LOSS.

1. Assign a person to attend the local evacuation and/or pop-up centre (s):
 - Assign a person to attend the local evacuation and/or pop-up centre.
 - Provide a list of residents with known or suspected cognitive impairment, or those who require extra help to the centre.
2. Identify where residents requiring assistance are located (e.g. evacuation centre, transitional housing)
3. Call a resident's emergency contacts to see if they can help
4. If a person is distressed, call Lifeline and hand the phone over to the resident, as Lifeline are trained to relieve distress in a crisis situation
5. If a close contact is not available, identify a community member or volunteer who can:
 - Attend the pop-up disaster relief centre with them and help them register for the support they require
 - Find them a suitable and local place to stay if their home is rendered uninhabitable or unsafe to return – if they have an in-home care provider, get in touch with them
 - Contact their local GP or pharmacy to ensure they have access to their medications
 - Provide essential support and help them with applications for grant funds, insurance claims and donations
 - Identify whether they have an enduring power of attorney or that someone is empowered to assist them with their applications for assistance (eg get in touch with NSW Trustee & Guardian or ask family members)
 - Revisit park signage to make sure it's in place and not confusing to residents with dementia

Residents with cognitive impairment may forget about important medications during a crisis.

One of the biggest challenges for emergency volunteers is knowing what medications residents are taking.

It's important that all residents visit an evacuation centre to ensure they're registered in the official system to receive support.



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Call 000 if the situation is life-threatening or time-critical

Lifeline **13 11 14**

Centrelink for emergency payments **180 22 66**

Resilience NSW

In-home care provider that services your park – use their network to provide continuity of care

See list of services on page 11

WHAT TO DO

AFTER A DISASTER

The weeks following the crisis can be the most important for the continuation of care. Volunteers will decline yet the amount of support needed remains high.



WHAT YOU CAN (SHOULD) DO



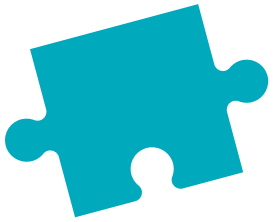
IS THEIR HOME UNINHABITABLE OR DO THEY NEED HELP WITH TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION?

YES

Identify local accommodation options or register the resident with the Department of Communities and Justice MyHousing online services. Fast tracking is available for persons affected by a declared emergency (see list of local resources on the back of this handbook).

NO

Identify in-home support or other financial support available (see list of local resources on the back of this handbook).



ARE SUPPORT SERVICES STILL BEING OFFERED THROUGH A STATE OR LOCAL AGENCY?

YES

Capture this in the resident's file, including the organisation and contact details of the person managing their care.

NO

Assign a local support person, volunteer or service that will continue to check in on the resident. Ensure the support person is aware of the available support networks and resources for persons with dementia (see list of local resources on the back of this handbook).



DOES THE RESIDENT NEED TO SEE THEIR GP?

YES

Help arrange an appointment and a support person to attend the appointment with them.

NO

Continue to check in on the resident on a semi-regular basis.



IS THE RESIDENT A NDIS PARTICIPANT?

YES

Residents under the age of 65 who qualify can access NDIS services. If they are a participant, contact their provider and seek their assistance and how they can help.

NO

If they meet the eligibility criteria, identify an in-home care provider that is able to assist them.



DOES THE RESIDENT QUALIFY FOR ACAT SERVICES?

YES

Referrals need to be made by a health or aged care professional. If the resident is in hospital, contact a family member or the person named in the enduring power of attorney. They can speak with hospital staff about a possible referral for ACAT assistance.

A resident's GP can make a referral, or if more subtle care and assistance is required, consider connecting them with a local in-home care provider that can facilitate an ACAT assessment.

NO

Seek available support through the disaster relief centre, Centrelink, CMOs, NFPs, local church groups or volunteers. See list of services on page 11.



DO THEY NEED HELP WITH MENTAL HEALTH?

YES

Contact the Department of Health, Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP), a mental health clinician or their GP. Alternatively, identify available local services (see list of local resources on the back of this handbook).

NO

Check in with them in a week and re-visit this question.

WHAT TO DO

MONTHS AFTER A DISASTER

Months after a disaster or crisis, after the out-of-area volunteers have gone home, vulnerable adults continue to struggle with getting back to their routine. For you and your staff, it's a good time to recap what went well and where you need more help.

- Hold a debriefing meeting with staff and key volunteers. Where do you need more help?
- Review your disaster management plan and resident data including consent forms.
- Arrange for NSW Trustee & Guardian to offer their services eg putting in place an enduring power of attorney.
- Update contacts and service groups.
- Schedule a refresher training course for staff and volunteers.
- Stay updated with training programs and resources.



The Port Macquarie state electorate has an estimated 1,857 people with dementia. This is the third highest prevalence in NSW.



TIPS TO STARTING THE CONVERSATION






















- Talking to someone about changes you've noticed in them can be difficult. It's important to encourage them to see their doctor to talk through what's been going on.
- Start the conversation in a space you both feel comfortable and can speak freely.
- Starting the conversation by talking about what you've noticed and the other common reasons this might be happening.
- If you don't have a close relationship with the person, talk to someone who they trust about what you've noticed. Ask them to speak with the person.
- Some people might be keen to see their doctor once you've spoken to them about their symptoms, especially if they've noticed these changes too.
- Others might resist the suggestion to see their doctor. This might be because they are fearful about the changes you've noticed and what they might mean, which is a very natural reaction.
- If the person does have dementia, their condition might limit them from recognising the changes in themselves, and this might cause them to dismiss the need to see a doctor.
- If you're feeling unsure about how to start the conversation contact the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 to talk to a professional about the possible next steps.



KNOW THE SIGNS OF DEMENTIA

- Forgetfulness or finding it difficult to remember new information
- Difficulty doing things you have done your whole life
- Regularly forgetting words or using the wrong word for things
- Getting lost or feeling disorientated in familiar places
- Impaired judgement
- Having difficulty with numbers
- Misplacing things or putting things away in unusual places
- Changes to mood and behaviour
- Loss of interest in things that usually bring joy

LOCAL AND NATIONAL NFP AND COMMUNITY-MANAGED ORGANISATIONS IN THE PORT-MACQUARIE HASTINGS LGA THAT CAN ASSIST IN A CRISIS AND EMERGENCY

	 FOOD	 MENTAL HEALTH	 HOUSING	 REBUILDING	 PETS	 OTHER
<p>Australian Red Cross</p> <p>When disaster strikes, we are on the ground and on the phone. 1800 733 276</p>						
<p>Community Health Laurieton</p> <p>Providing a range of services for people of all ages. 02 6559 9003</p>						
<p>Garden Village</p> <p>Port Macquarie retirement living, aged care and home care. 02 6582 8923</p>						
<p>Lifeline</p> <p>Ensuring crisis support is freely available to our community. 02 6581 2800</p>						
<p>Make a Difference</p> <p>Supporting disadvantaged and marginalised people. 0431 519 342</p>						
<p>Mission Australia</p> <p>Helping people find safe and affordable housing. 02 6589 5024</p>						
<p>RSPCA</p> <p>Foster care support and community outreach. 02 6581 0380</p>						

Rural Adversity Mental Health Program

Linking people to
mental health services
and resources.
02 4220 7600

Salvation Army

Supporting those
that need financial or
material assistance.
02 6583 7444

Samaritan's Purse

Providing emergency
relief and development
assistance.
1300 884 468
1300 884 468

St Agnes Parish

Providing a range of
community services
and is a registered aged
care and NDIS provider.
(02) 5525 3600



RESOURCES

Free online courses and guides about dementia

Understanding Dementia
MOOC University of Tasmania
Course information
mooc.utas.edu.au

Guide to becoming a dementia friendly community

Local dementia focused organisations
Port Macquarie Dementia Friendly Community
DementiaFriendlyPortMacquarie@gmail.com
Dementiafriendlypmq.com.au
[@DementiaFriendlyPortMacquarie](https://www.facebook.com/DementiaFriendlyPortMacquarie)

Local community organisations

Search the My Community Directory for local services
such as accommodation, animal services, disability
services, crisis and emergency services.
mycommunitydirectory.com.au and search
Port Macquarie-Hastings Community Directory.

Examples for the Port Macquarie Hastings Region:

Garden Village
Just Better Care
Home Instead
Bolton Clarke at Home Support
Home Nursing Group
Home Care - Catholic Care of the Aged
HammondCare at Home
Omnicare
Uniting Healthy Living for Seniors
Five Good Friends
The Salvation Army Home Care

Government organisations

SES
Fire and Recue NSW
Rural Fire Brigade
Resilience NSW
NDIS
Mid North Coast Local Health District – Community
Health Centres

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