



Research: recovering from collective trauma events

Recent violent and traumatic public incidents have prompted a new research project led by Australian Red Cross to prepare for and support positive recovery.

Red Cross teams provided psychological first aid to members of the public caught up in traumatic events in Flinders Street, Melbourne; Dreamworld on the Gold Coast; and the Lindt Café siege in Sydney.

These incidents – all leading to death and injury in a violent manner – can challenge perceptions of safety and social trust. They have also provoked public outpourings of grief amid intense media exposure, and may be highly politicised.

Red Cross has been responding to collective trauma events for many years. The new research will provide emergency management practitioners with consensus guidelines on best practices to support a positive recovery.

The scope of this research will cover diverse themes from psychological first aid to internal and external communication, memorial management, and avoidance of minority discrimination. Findings will be valuable for the emergency services sector, including state and local government, and other agencies and personnel who prepare for and respond to collective trauma.

The research is conducted by the Emergency Services and Research and Insights teams at Australian Red Cross in collaboration with Professor Lou Harms (University of Melbourne), Kate Fitzgerald (Emergency Management Victoria), and Dr Rob Gordon (clinical and trauma psychologist).

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If you have practical or managerial experience of recovery from trauma events, research expertise in this field, if you have been personally impacted by a collective trauma event, or to learn more or contribute to the research, please contact Agathe Randrianarisoa, Senior Research and Insights Consultant at Australian Red Cross at arandrianarisoa@redcross.org.au.