

MEDIA RELEASE



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Nurturing children after a disaster

Caring for children is a big responsibility under 'normal' circumstances. But when something out of our control happens, such as a natural disaster, caring for children becomes an even greater responsibility. Furthermore, the care for families as well as children also becomes important.

When natural disasters happen, children may become confused and fearful. Young children do not have the ability to understand or process their feelings. The most important way you can help children who are stressed from a natural disaster experience is to help them feel safe again. Helping children feel safe takes time, patience and the ability of the adults in their lives to provide reassurance again and again. During such difficult times, our educators can help children at the centre by providing a safe, nurturing environment while they are away from their families. We can re-establish the routines children need in their daily lives.

We are aware not all children will display similar behaviours resulting from stress, so we need to know each individual child and take note of any changes in their behaviours. We need to speak calmly and reassuringly at all times, keep routines normal, maintain a peaceful atmosphere, make sure the children have regular healthy meals, answer any questions the children have, be calm and caring, and maintain clear rules and expectations for appropriate behaviour. These activities help children feel a sense of control and safety.

Children are very aware of what is happening around them, even if they cannot put words to it or understand it. During times of crises, children may feel a loss of control over their world. One way we can help children gain a sense of control is to allow them to have choices. All choices given to children should be acceptable to you. For example, you can give a four-year-old the choice of playing with the blocks or doing an art activity. No matter which activity the child chooses it is acceptable to you. But it allows the child to make a decision and have a voice in what they can do at that moment. Choices not only help with a feeling of control, but also help children be responsible for their actions and decisions.

If there is any way we can help with your child or you would like any further information about our centre, please contact us at Withcott Early Childhood Centre on (07) 4630 3722.

Taken from *Nurturing Children After Natural Disasters* by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

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About Churches of Christ Care

Churches of Christ Care is a division of Churches of Christ in Queensland—a group of churches that is part of the worldwide Christian church.

We strive to create an inclusive, caring, compassionate environment that meets its clients' needs without discrimination or prejudice. Everyone is welcome to call on our help regardless of their religious background.

Churches of Christ Care is one of Queensland's leading providers of early childhood, child protection, affordable housing, retirement living and aged care services. We are a not-for-profit organisation that supports more than 27,000 clients each year in urban, rural and remote areas.

We operate 137 services throughout Queensland with the support of more than 2,800 staff and over 700 volunteers.

Churches of Christ Care is built on a foundation of Christian values, commitment to quality care, and trust and respect for clients and the community.