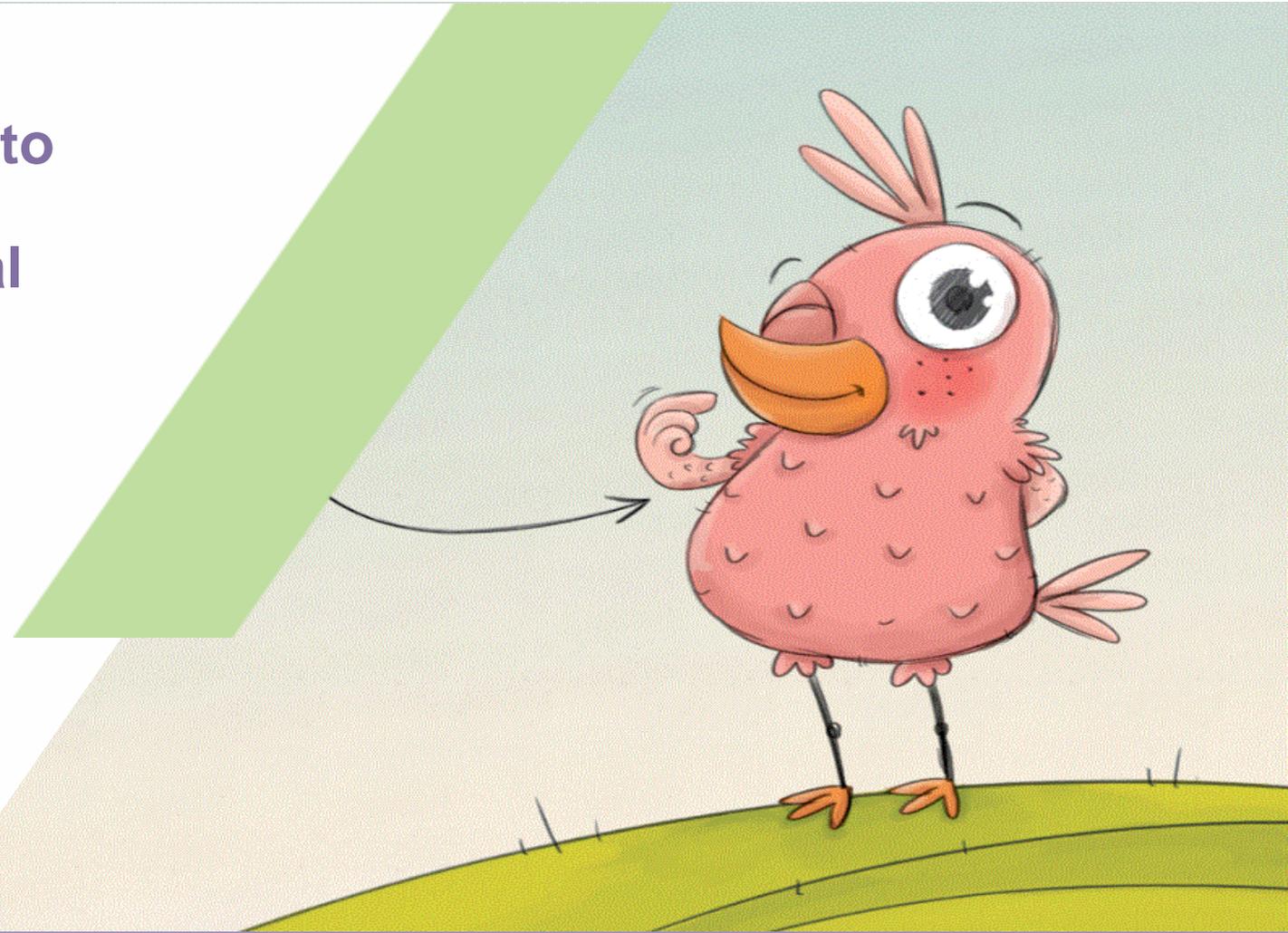


Birdies Tree: Engaging Early Childhood Education and Care to support optimal early child development following a natural hazards

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Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health



QCPIMH - who are we? what do we do?

The Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH) was established in 2008 as a state-wide hub of expertise in perinatal and infant mental health. QCPIMH has both a state-wide strategy and service development unit and a clinical infant mental health unit which provides specialist infant mental health services in Brisbane.

Key Directions:

1. Service development and implementation
2. Workforce development
3. Mental health promotion and prevention
4. Research and evaluation
5. Advocacy





Where did it all begin

2011 Natural Disasters

- 332 major weather events
- 244.7 million people – USD\$366.1 billion
- 5 nations most expensive
- 7/10 countries, high – middle income (World Bank)
- Tohoku earthquake and tsunami
19,850 deaths USD\$210billion
- China, US, Philippines, India and Indonesia
- The 2011 summer



Challenge: Where is the baby?

- Children know more than we think... don't avoid
- ↑ knowledge = ↓ anx
- Scaring doesn't help – what can be done
- Interaction + guidance = problem focused coping
- Evidence that health +ive ↑ video games.
- Play = processing



Fact Sheets

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

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Recovering together after a natural disaster

Supporting families in pregnancy and early parenthood

Disasters affect people in different ways. Each family member may react differently to the same event. These reactions can be severe, and are usually worst during or straight after the disaster. In most cases, reactions fade over time.

Common reactions to disasters include:

- feeling numb and detached, or overwhelmed
- feeling tearful, sad or guilty
- feeling anxious or irritable
- feeling jumpy, restless and unable to focus
- feeling unable to plan ahead
- changes in sleep or appetite
- troubling memories or bad dreams
- constant questioning and distressed thoughts
- 'reliving' the event.

Things you can do to recover:

- have reasonable expectations
- break tasks down into small, manageable steps
- take time to relax by doing something you enjoy
- do something fun with your baby
- try to get enough sleep or rest
- communicate and connect with others
- think about your baby's needs
- look towards the future
- seek help if necessary.

Looking after yourself helps you look after your baby

Always seek professional help, if you or a family member experiences any of the following:

- the above symptoms continue for longer than one month and affect your day-to-day functioning
- feelings of hopelessness or lack of interest in the future
- avoiding things that bring back memories of what happened
- being fearful, nervous or panicky (racing heart, startling easily, dizziness, shortness of breath)
- lack of energy and ongoing tiredness or numbness
- lack of enjoyment from things that you usually enjoy
- having trouble relating to and caring for your baby
- feeling guilty
- wanting to harm yourself or your baby, or thinking about ending your life.



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Recovering together after a natural disaster

Supporting families with babies and young children

Stress caused by disasters can make babies and young children feel unsafe and insecure. Without help, they may continue to suffer stress from the disaster, which can affect their long-term emotional wellbeing. Babies and young children manage their feelings through relationships with parents and other caring adults. Strong relationships help babies and young children recover from disasters.

Common physical and emotional reactions of babies and young children when distressed include:

- being clingy, whingey, whiney or unsettled – crying more
- seeming fearful, especially when parents are not present
- being more withdrawn, less responsive to parents and/or others
- eating less or more than usual
- having difficulty sleeping
- being hard to settle and soothe.

Young children may also:

- be more easily frustrated and have more tantrums
- be more aggressive
- act out scary events in their play
- have nightmares
- lose previous skills or 'go backwards' e.g. toileting, walking, talking

If your baby or young child continues to experience any of the above symptoms and this causes you difficulty or concern, speak to a health professional.

Things you can do to help your baby or child:

- spend time with them to help them feel safe
- re-establish regular routines as soon as possible
- play with your child – choose activities they enjoy like bubbles, play dough, reading, singing and dancing
- have fun together
- communicate with others who support your child
- help your child feel understood by labelling their feelings
- limit their exposure to TV and radio reporting on the disaster
- look after yourself.



Booklets

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

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Supporting families with babies and young children



Two sided information sheets with activities

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering Together after a Natural Disaster - Cyclone

Information and Activity Sheet for Families with Babies and Young Children



When natural disasters happen, nearly everyone has some reaction and emotional response, whether they are directly or indirectly affected. These emotions affect people of all ages, in different ways. They can occur immediately, later, or even long after the disaster has passed.

People may experience thoughts, feelings, physical reactions or behaviours that are intense, confusing and frightening. Such experiences are usually most severe during or straight after the disaster, then fade with time.

Babies and young children can easily become distressed by what is happening in the world around them. Anything that creates stress for the family can make babies and young children feel unsafe and unsettled. Without help, they may continue to be affected by the disaster, with long term impacts on their physical and social development and their emotional wellbeing.

Babies and young children manage their feelings through their relationships with parents and other caring adults. Parents and carers need to look after their own emotional wellbeing, so they can support their baby or young child. Remember, babies and young children communicate through their behaviour. If your child doesn't seem to "be themselves" or you have concerns about their behaviour, think about what their behaviour may be telling you.

You will find information and activities below. There is also a short story to read and talk about with your baby or young child.

Did you know that in times of stress, babies and young children may

- become worried, but may not have the words to tell you
- be clingy or whiney, have more tantrums, or seem more "helpless"
- become aggressive
- cry a lot
- eat less or more than usual
- have difficulty sleeping or sleep more
- need repeated reassurance that they are safe
- want to be closer to their parents or carers and need more cuddles

Things parents and carers can do

- read the story over the page with your child and talk about the pictures
- name your child's feelings, for example "you seem to be feeling sad"
- try to spend time having fun with your child each day. Choose activities you know they enjoy, for example bubbles, games, reading
- replace special toys as soon as possible if they are lost or damaged. They can be a comfort
- answer questions honestly but don't give more information than is needed

re-establish regular routines as soon as possible. Such routines are calming and create predictability

- avoid exposing your child to natural disaster coverage through television, radio or newspapers.
- try not to discuss worrying topics in front of babies and young children. They understand more than we realise

Things to remember

- talk with your child's childcare worker or other carer about how your child is feeling
- talk to a professional and ask for help if necessary
- stay in contact with others
- look after yourself

If you or your family are finding it difficult to cope with a natural disaster, professional help is available.

Where to get help

- Your local doctor (General Practitioner)
- Your local Child and Youth Mental Health Service
- Your local Child Health Service
- Lifeline (24hr) 131 155
- BeyondBlue info line 1300 224 436





Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Birdie and the Cyclone



One day Birdie saw dark clouds in the sky.



The sky got darker and darker. The wind blew harder and harder. Rain began to fall. "It's a cyclone!" said Birdie. She felt scared.



When the cyclone stopped, there was mud and rubbish everywhere. Birdie's nest was blown away. She felt very sad.



Helpers came and cleaned up all the rubbish. They built Birdie a new nest. Birdie felt safe and happy again.

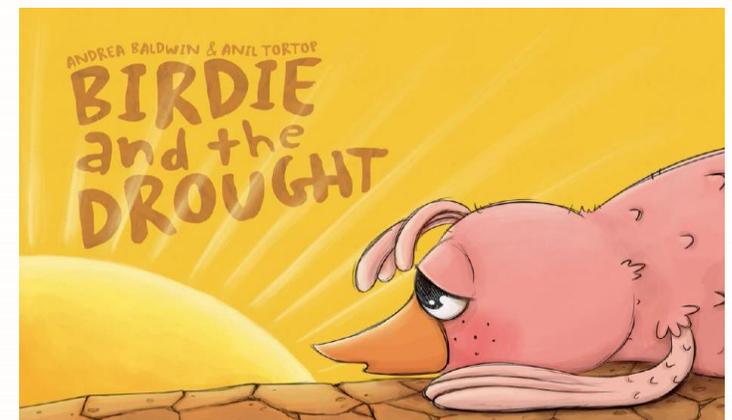
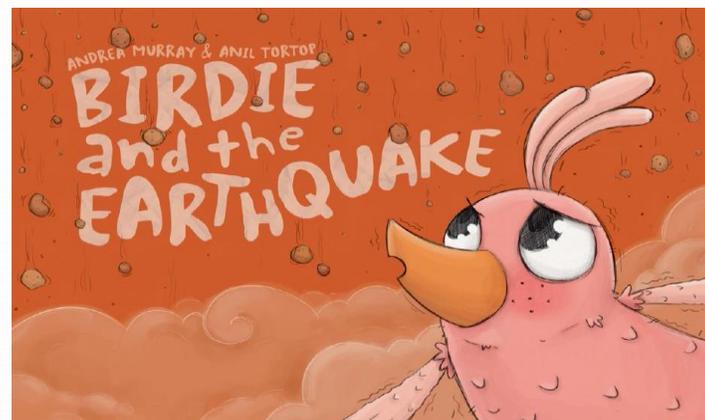
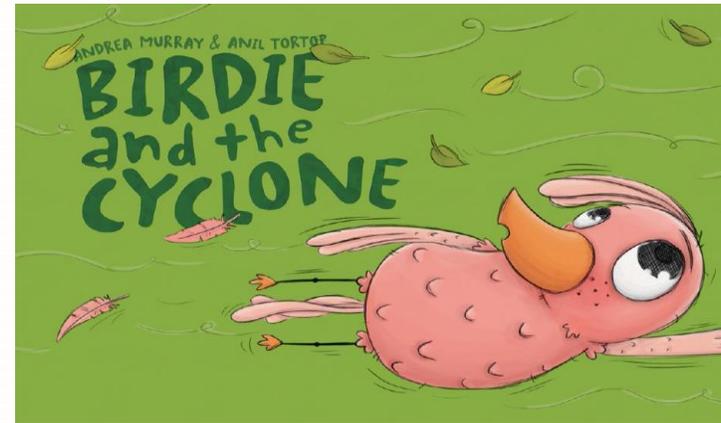
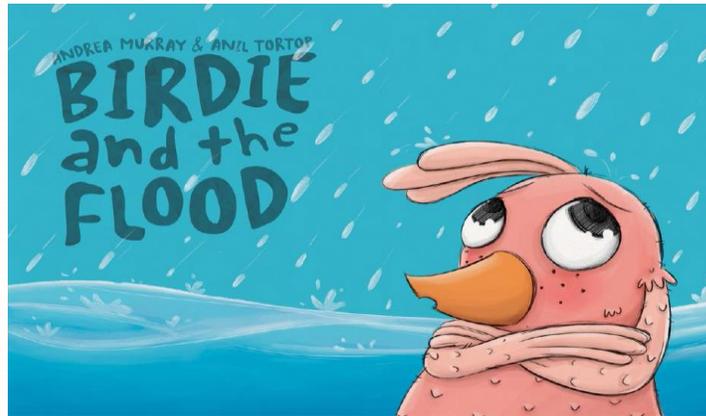
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Contact us

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Birdie and Mr Frog



Recovering together after a natural disaster



Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Welcome to Birdie's Tree! Natural disasters like storms, cyclones, floods or fire can be very frightening and upsetting for babies and young children. Playing a therapeutic game or reading a story with a caring adult can help a young child work through the scary experiences and 'big feelings'.

There's information for parents and carers too. Come and meet Birdie and Mr Frog!



www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery



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Early Childhood Education and Care

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

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Recovering together after a natural disaster

A resource guide for early childhood education and care services



Theory section

- Factors Affecting Children's Experience
- signs & symptoms
- Why early intervention?
- Helping Babies and Young Children Cope Using the Program
- Other Beneficial Activities
- Self-care for Educators

Activities

- Educational Programs and Activities - Children 0-24 months
- Educational Programs and Activities - Children 2-4 years.

Research Project Aims

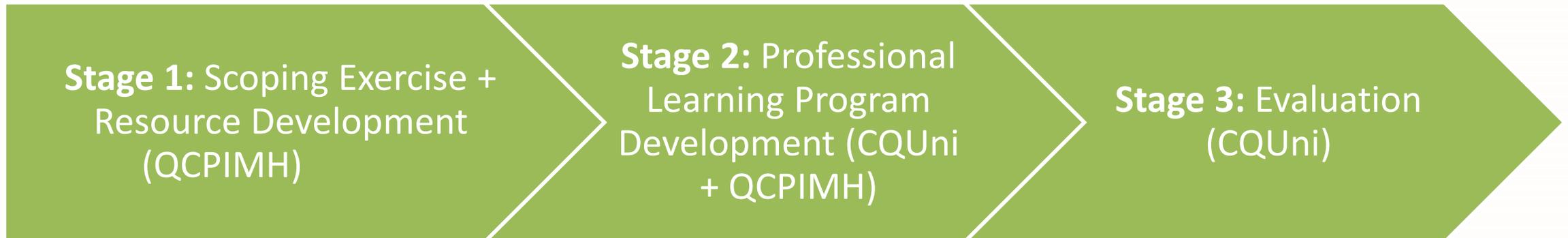
- To develop the capacity of the Early Childhood Education and Care workforce to support young children's approaches to processing the emotional impacts of natural hazards and disasters.

Intended Outcomes

Increase in educator:

- knowledge about the impacts of experiencing natural hazards and disasters on young children;
- ability to identify and appropriately respond to the needs of children and their families during and post-disaster;
- ability to identify when a child is in need of referral for additional support, and the appropriate referral pathway; and
- self-efficacy to support young children's social emotional well-being, and how this relates to processing the emotional impact of disasters.

Research Design



Stage 1: Scoping and Resource Development

- QCPIMH consultation with early childhood learning centres in Toowoomba / Lockyer Valley (post-2011 floods);
- Birdie's Tree resource development;
- Literature review:
 - Infant mental health,
 - Disaster resilience + current disaster resilience education programs,
 - Early childhood educator professional development and learning;
- Consultation with ECEC sector.

Stage 2: Professional Learning Program Development

- Collaborative approach – CQUni & QCPIMH, in consultation with ECEC sector partner
- Program aligns with the *Recovering Together After A Natural Disaster: A Resource Guide for Early Childhood Education and Care Services*
- Program development informed by Scoping Exercise
 - What do we know about the needs of the ECEC workforce?
 - What are the needs of young children and families pre- and post-disaster?
 - What do we know about disaster resilience and preparedness education?
 - How do we ensure effectiveness and sustainability of the program?

Stage 3: Resource Guide and Program Evaluation

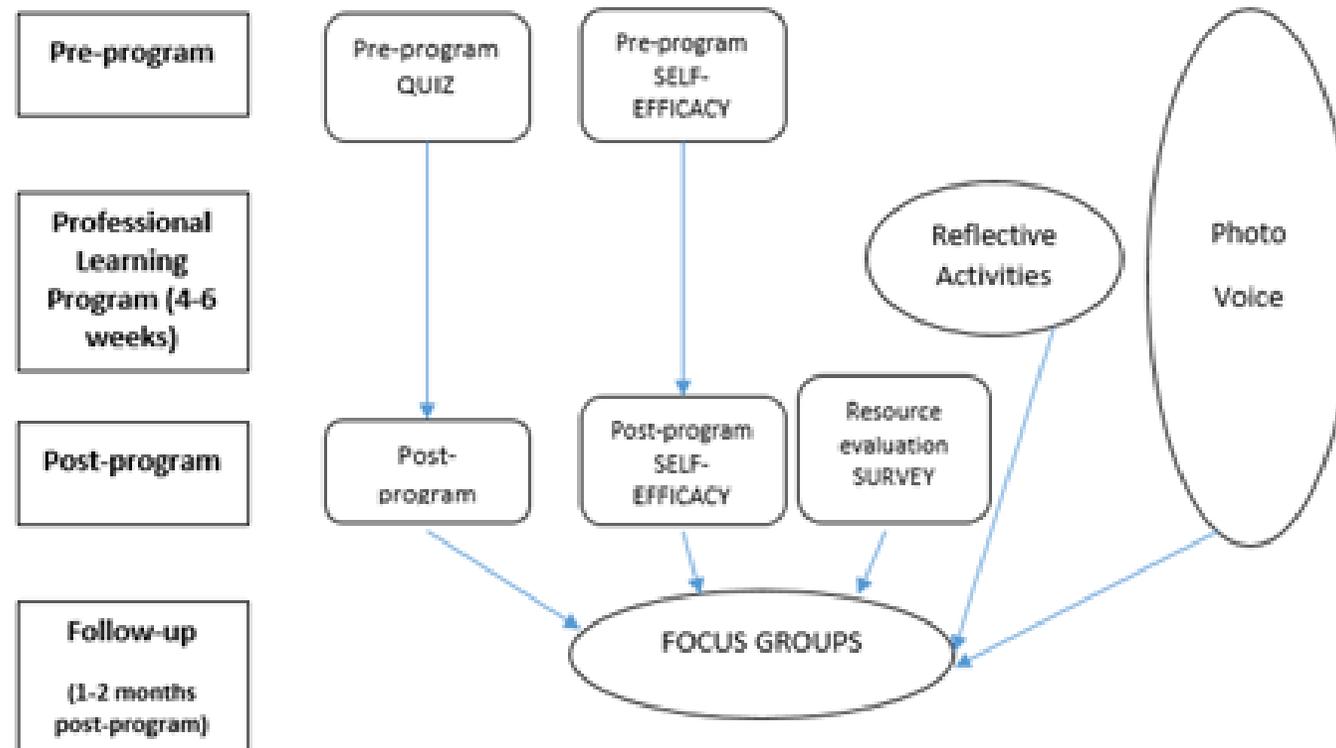


Figure 1: Data Collection Timeline

Summary

- QCPIMH resources
 - Available on request and for download
- PhD journey
 - Planned for completion October 2020
 - Updates
- Please make contact for further information

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Birdie's Tree <https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>