

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE and OUT-OF-CONTROL FIRES in Australia

Right now, throughout the world, children are feeling the impacts of climate change. They are watching rising seas threaten their homes, droughts affect their families' livelihoods and more powerful and frequent typhoons and cyclones destroy whole communities, and children here in Australia are not immune.

The typical fire season in Australia used to coincide with our summer months, nowadays, because of the effects of climate change, we're experiencing out-of-control fires much earlier and later than usual and in places not typically at risk.

We believe that talking to kids in Australia about climate change and fires will help them better prepare, increase awareness of the impacts of climate change at home and encourage children to play a vital role in protecting our environment.

FIVE STEPS



Keep up to date with weather and warnings

We know human activity often starts out-of-control fires, such as sparks from BBQs, campfires, welding and grinding machines and burning off activities. Talk to your children about weather warnings and updates, particularly warnings for total fire ban days, and explain activities that are prohibited and why. Many of the key agencies have apps or provide warnings in formats that older children can follow.



Make sure your children know vital information

Can your children recite their full name and address, emergency contact numbers and any allergies or medical conditions they have? Act out how to call emergency services, so they know what they need to say. Include your children when developing your family's fire plan, and make sure you practice simulations.



Help your children to know they won't be alone

Disasters are a time when communities come together. Families, neighbours, emergency service personnel and government authorities all have skills and resources to contribute – your children should know that you won't be alone if a fire strikes. Also, ask your children what they can do to help others in your community. Your local Country Fire Authority (CFA) may have open days, or you can ask the CFA to visit local schools to help engage children in understanding the vital roles people and organisations play.



Reassure your children

It's really important that children feel safe. If they see firefighting services in action or hear sirens, reassure them that these emergency services are skilled at what they do. Always answer your children's questions about fires, as it's important that children feel comfortable to raise their fears with you, and are encouraged to speak freely about things that are concerning them.



Do something about climate change – and remember you are a role model for your children!

Let your children know ways they can help reverse the impacts of climate change and explain why.

Some ideas:

In day-to-day life: Travel on public transport as much as possible instead of in the car; walking and cycling are best. Spend time outdoors as playing outside helps children to better understand the environment. Use reusable drink bottles and say no to plastic bags.

At home: Recycle, grow vegetables, start a compost, turn off lights when you leave the room, and keep electronic devices off during the day when you don't need them. Eat fruit that's in

season, and think about how far that piece of fruit has travelled to reach your mouth! Reinforce environmental values by saying to your children: "it is so great how you are not wasteful!" or "it's great how you care for nature"

For children at school: Are you learning about climate change at school? If not ask your teacher to include it in the curriculum. Is your school harvesting rainwater from its roof? Are you growing vegetables at school? Could your school be doing more to be a green sustainable school? Talk to your friends about climate change – are they aware of it, how do they feel about it, what can you and they do about it?

Children across the world are feeling the impacts of climate change. You can help by making a donation to Plan International Australia. Visit plan.org.au or ring 13 75 26.