



11 February 09

MEDIA RELEASE

Helping children cope with distressing images of bushfires

Jane Roberts, President of the Australian Council for Children and the Media, also known as Young Media Australia (YMA), today joined with many community leaders in extending, on behalf of YMA, her sympathy to those who have suffered such terrible losses of loved ones and property in the Victorian bushfires.

“While media are rightly providing full coverage of this tragedy”, she said “YMA feels that it is important at this time to remind parents that many children who live in areas unaffected by the bushfires could become quite anxious and distressed if they are repeatedly exposed to some of the dramatic footage being shown on TV news and current affairs programs”

Dr. Glenn Cupit, Senior Lecturer in Child Development at the University of South Australia, supported Ms Roberts’ concerns. He said: “Very young children are particularly vulnerable to scary visual images, and when certain footage is repeated many times, they are likely to think the event is *actually* happening over and over again. Older children will be upset by the fact that the people affected look just like them and their families. Stories of children being injured or separated from their parents, the death of family pets and interviews with emotionally distraught or shocked adults and children can make their world feel more unsafe than it really is.”

Parents can find out more about likely impacts of media coverage of tragic events or the impact of TV News in general from the Young Media Australia website (www.youngmedia.org.au). Michael Grose, one of Australia’s leading parenting educators, has written a resource to assist parents to deal with helping their kids cope with the media coverage of this particular event (www.parentingideas.com.au).

YMA is a unique national community organisation with a strong interest and expertise in the role that media experiences play in the development of Australian children. It is committed to promoting healthy choices and stronger voices in children’s media. Parents, caregivers and the general community can access information and advice about the impact of the media on children by calling the YMA Helpline (1800 700 357, national, freecall, 24/7) or visiting the YMA Website (www.youngmedia.org.au).

*For more information or to arrange an interview,
please call Jane Roberts (WA) on 0410 509 685, or
Glenn Cupit (SA) on (08) 8302-4580 (bus.)*