

24 March 2011

Dear Katsuo,

I am writing to let you know that the members of the Australian Psychological Society are shocked and saddened to hear about the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan with such devastating effects. Since my return to Australia I have been following the news of the impact of the quake and tsunami each day and now the struggle to contain leakages from the nuclear reactors. I think of you, your family and your colleagues and what you must be going through. Our members' thoughts are also with you and the people and communities affected.

We have great admiration for the work that has been done in Japan over the past years to prepare well for disaster events like this one, not just with good building codes, but also with efforts to teach entire communities how to prepare for earthquakes and tsunamis, and how to protect themselves during and after an emergency. We know that your country will be fully occupied with organising its responses to the earthquake, and we wish you well.

When we met, we talked about the APS's disaster response work, and I would like to reiterate the offer of support I made for you to use any of the materials on our website that could be helpful in the following months. If we can be of any assistance, please let us know how. The APS has a Disaster Preparedness and Response Reference Group, and we would like to offer to help in whatever way you would find useful, when the time is right for you.

Following the Black Saturday bushfires of 2009, and the recent widespread floods as well as Cyclone Yasi, we have been very involved in developing and training health professionals to provide psychosocial support and mental health care to people affected by the fires. As well as Psychological First Aid as a first response, we trained many mental health professionals in Skills for Psychological Recovery, a brief, secondary prevention model designed to teach people basic skills like problem solving, managing reactions, and rebuilding healthy relationships. This approach was developed in New Orleans after cyclone Katrina, and has also been used in China and Italy after recent earthquakes, and in some parts of Asia after the 2004 tsunami.

We also have a disaster web portal for health professionals working with people affected by disasters. If any of these resources can be of assistance, you are very welcome to use them. The site is called Psychosocial Support in Disasters (PSID) and can be accessed by clicking on the following link:
<http://www.psid.org.au/>.

We wish you well in the coming weeks and months, and in that spirit, please let us know if we can be of any assistance at all.

APS Psychologists: 'Good Thinking'

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Littlefield

Prof Lyn Littlefield
Executive Director
Australian Psychological Society