Critical Incident Management Plan

This Critical Incident Management Plan has been prepared for the whole School to assist us in dealing with Critical Incidents that may occur within our School Community. It forms part of our Business Continuity Plan at Carey.

Experience has shown that most school communities are affected by a significant incident at some time. If we give adequate attention to the processes of coping, they can become powerful healing and restorative resources in times of trauma and distress. By developing a plan, and becoming thoroughly familiar with the issues involved, we will be in a better position to deal with the unexpected, to make appropriate responses that will assist staff, students and families to deal appropriately with their responses to the crisis and to return to normal functioning as soon as possible.

An annual review of the Resource List, which includes emergency and recovery telephone numbers, and the List of Staff and their addresses and contact telephone numbers, will ensure that current accurate contacts are always available.

This document should be kept in appropriate locations in the School so that it can be easily accessed should the need arise.

Philip Grutzner
Principal

August, 2010
Acknowledgments

Material included in this document has drawn heavily on the thorough work of other educational organisations, in particular:

*Managing School Emergencies: Minimising the Impact of Trauma on Staff and Students*, Education Victoria, 1997


Training and workshop material was provided by Dr Robyn Robinson from her Basic Critical Incident Stress Management training program. In addition, Dr Robinson provided consultancy to the development of Carey’s Critical Incident Plan.
## Contents

### Section 1: General Principles of Sound Critical Incident Management

1.1 Rationale for Developing a Critical Incident Management Plan  
1.2 Defining Critical Incidents  
1.3 Key Elements in a Critical Incident Management Plan  
1.4 People Who May be Affected by Critical Incidents  
1.5 Grief and Trauma: Symptoms and Responses  
1.6 Moving from Response to Recovery  
1.7 General Principles of School Recovery  
1.8 Staff Training in Critical Incident Management  
1.9 Whole School Business Continuity Plan

### Section 2: Carey’s Critical Incident Action Plan

2.1 Information Gathering  
2.2 Formation of the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)  
2.3 Tasks of the Critical Incident Response Team  
   2.3.1 Informing the School Community  
      2.3.1.1 Staff  
      2.3.1.2 Close Friends and Their Families  
      2.3.1.3 Students Who Need to Know  
      2.3.1.4 Parents and the School Community  
      2.3.1.5 Managing Internal Students  
   2.3.2 Allocating Resources  
      2.3.2.1 Managing Telephone Calls  
      2.3.2.2 Security  
      2.3.2.3 Setting up a Recovery Room  
   2.3.3 Liaising with the Media  
   2.3.4 Restore Normal Routine  
   2.3.5 Conduct an Operational Debrief  
   2.3.6 Ongoing Support and Monitoring  
2.4 Critical Incident Stress Management Team  
   2.4.1 Aims of Critical Incident Stress Management  
   2.4.2 Role of the School Counsellors  
   2.4.3 Critical Incident Stress Management Interventions  
      2.4.3.1 Demobilisation  
      2.4.3.2 Defusings  
      2.4.3.3 Stress Debriefings

### Attachments: Practical Resources for Staff

- A Common Reactions to Traumatic Events  
- B Initial Critical Incident Record  
- C Emergency Telephone Contact List  
- D Phone Tree  
- E 1. Discussing a Critical Incident with Classes  
   2 Short Term Tasks with Students  
   3 Practical Ideas for the Classroom  
   4 Related Student Fiction  
- F Coping with Suicide  
- G Sample Letters to the School Community  
- H Maps of School Properties - Donvale, Bulleen, Kew, Toonalook  
- I Preparing a Media Release  
- J Funerals  
- K Business Continuity Plan overview
Section 1: General Principles of Sound Critical Incident Management

1.1 Rationale for Developing a Critical Incident Management Plan

Events that cause severe emotional distress may occur at any time, and without warning. These events, (variously called Critical Incidents, Traumatic Incidents, Disasters, Emergencies, or Crises), often denote disaster or crisis situations which affect many people and which can give rise to a range of stress or trauma responses. They can also refer to events of a much smaller scale.

In most cases emotional and psychological reactions to critical incidents are normal human reactions to abnormal circumstances and, with appropriate support, most people can deal with these and soon return to normal functioning. For some, specialist professional support may be advisable when symptoms are extreme, or persistent and are causing an individual on-going trauma or difficulty.

Healthy coping responses are likely to be facilitated when an organisation acknowledges the effects of traumatic events on individuals and creates opportunities for individuals to appropriately address their needs for recovery and healing.

It is the nature of many critical incidents that they come upon us without warning and require immediate thoughtful response. Due to the already heavy workload of school personnel, it is extremely helpful to have a plan in place beforehand. This comprises:

(a) identifying the kinds of incidents that could occur in our school community

(b) developing a general framework of response, which guides the specific response in each situation.

(c) provision of appropriate training for relevant personnel which will equip them for their response.

Carey has a strong Pastoral Care philosophy and a well-developed infra-structure to support students and their families. It highly values its staff and their welfare and the Carey Critical Incident Management Plan serves to maintain this philosophy in times of crisis.

1.2 Defining Critical Incidents

A critical incident is any event which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events which are outside the range of ordinary human experiences. Because they are so sudden and unusual, they can have a strong emotional effect even on well-trained, experienced people. (Mitchell and Everly, 1997) Critical incidents can range from small scale localised incidents lasting minutes and affecting a single school, or section of a school, through to large scale events requiring state level coordination and assistance from external agencies. Critical incidents can also be events which, by their nature, have the potential to leave lasting effects on those involved.
Some Critical Incidents that may affect a school community include:

- a death in the school community - following illness, by accident, by suicide, or as a result of criminal behaviour;
- serious injury to a member of the school community;
- students or staff lost or injured on an excursion;
- violent assault of a member of the school community;
- violent events in the community;
- witnessing a serious accident or an act of violence;
- significant damage to, or destruction of, part or whole of the school property, due to vandalism, accident, or fire, flooding or some other extreme of nature;
- bomb threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard;
- use of violent weapons in the school;
- outsiders coming into school and being aggressive towards students and/or staff;
- disappearance of a student or staff member;
- social abuse of students or teachers;
- media coverage of issues in a way which is distressing to the school community.

Such incidents often involve:

- rapid time sequences;
- overwhelming of usual coping responses of individuals and communities;
- severe disruption, at least temporarily, to the functioning of individuals or communities;
- perceptions of threat and helplessness, and a turning to others for help (Raphael, 1986).

### 1.3 Key Elements in a Critical Incident Management Plan

A critical incident management plan can be thought of as having five phases as outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Preparedness</th>
<th>Crisis Response</th>
<th>Post Crisis Response</th>
<th>Long-term Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The identification of risks that are specific to the school community environment.</td>
<td>The planning and rehearsal of processes to be undertaken when an emergency occurs.</td>
<td>Implementing planned procedures to ensure the ongoing safety of the school community.</td>
<td>Implementation of recovery processes to facilitate the return to routine.</td>
<td>Involves:</td>
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<td>- risk identification</td>
<td>- planning</td>
<td>- planning</td>
<td>- demobilisation</td>
<td>- resumption of regular routine</td>
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<td>- safe practice</td>
<td>- rehearsal</td>
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<td>- defusing</td>
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<td>- debriefing</td>
<td>- review of existing plan</td>
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1.4 People Who May be Affected by Critical Incidents

*(From: Traumatic Incidents Affecting Schools)*

When a traumatic incident affects a school community, those in that community will play various roles and encounter different experiences. The following model classifies the various groups of people who may be affected by the incident. This is a useful guide for school support personnel in identifying those who are most likely to need assistance.

**People directly exposed to incidents**

Those who suffer the full intensity of trauma including injuries, e.g. teachers, other school staff, children, including the commitment to assistance to aboriginal children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, children with a disability.

**Relatives and friends**

Those who are grieving for the injured and affected, e.g. families, children, teachers, school staff.

**Helpers/recovery personnel**

Those who need help to maintain functional efficiency during the incident and to cope with the psychological effects, e.g. teachers, administrators, school office/maintenance staff, counsellors, guidance officers, Emergency Services personnel.

**School Community**

Those in the school community affected but not directly involved, e.g. other parents, school staff, students

**People indirectly involved**

Others in the general community affected but not directly involved, e.g. those who could have been direct victims but were not because of chance or circumstances; those for whom stress is triggered as a result of the traumatic incident.

1.5 Grief and Trauma: Symptoms and Responses

Whilst there is considerable overlap, grief and trauma responses are distinct reactions with their own emotional, behavioural, physiological and cognitive manifestations. (Raphael & Meldrum, 1994)

**Grief responses** include a range of:

- feelings (e.g., anger, sadness, intense yearning, numbness and shock, fatigue, guilt),
- physiological responses (e.g., sleep and appetite disturbances, tightness in the chest or throat, hollowness in the stomach, sense of depersonalisation),
cognitions (e.g., disbelief, confusion, preoccupation, visual and auditory hallucinations), and
behaviours (e.g., social withdrawal and avoidance of duties, dreams, crying, avoidance of
reminders of the loss or alternatively pre-occupation with remembering),

Trauma responses typically include:

- severe anxiety and anxiety related reactions,
- depression,
- sleep disturbance (including nightmares),
- flashbacks and other intrusive experiences,
- hyper-alertness,
- restlessness and excessive vigilance,
- exaggerated startle response, and
- numbing or avoidance of reminders of the event

Children’s and adolescents’ responses will vary according to their developmental maturity. Refer to Attachment A: Common Reactions to Traumatic Events.

Individuals’ responses to critical incidents seem to depend upon three groups of factors:

- pre-trauma variables (such as level of development, previous experience of death or trauma, family issues, and socio-demographic factors);
- experience of the traumatic event (such as degree of bereavement or life threat, proximity to the event, suddenness, and rate of onset); and
- the recovery environment, including social support, helper reaction, additional stressors, and community attitudes.

Grief and trauma responses to traumatic events are normal human responses to unusually overwhelming circumstances. With support, most people are able to progress naturally through the four main tasks of mourning (Worden, 1992):

1. Accepting the reality of the loss.
2. Dealing with the pain of grief.
3. Adjusting to the environment without the lost person or possession.
4. Withdrawing emotional energy and re-investing that energy in another relationship.

When grieving is associated with a traumatic experience, reactions to the shock of the trauma tend to dominate and the grief process may not properly begin for several weeks.

Responses to a Critical Incident may be complicated by the re-emergence of unresolved grief/trauma associated with previous experiences (in some cases, these may have occurred many years prior to the current event). Some individuals (students or staff) who are not directly involved in, or deemed to be affected by, the current crisis, may therefore experience distress or other difficulties.
1.6 Moving From Response to Recovery

It is important to recognise the existence of the recovery aspect associated with critical incidents. Whilst the initial incident and the immediate response are clearly identifiable and an accepted part of emergency management planning and procedures, it is the recovery activity which will determine the extent to which individuals and groups will cope with the long term effects which can flow from a critical incident.

Whilst the immediate physical safety and well-being of staff and students is the initial concern, the recovery activity addresses the long term physical and emotional well-being of individuals.

A number of emergency services in Victoria will respond to calls for immediate assistance, e.g. police, fire brigade, ambulance. During the emergency they will assume legal responsibility for control and coordination at the incident site. As the immediate crisis passes, it is important that effective recovery activities follow.

A common reaction to critical incidents is to deny that the event has had any significant impact on individuals and to overlook the value of external support. Experience has shown that:

- speed of response
- appropriateness of response
- the opportunity to talk about the event and personal reactions to it
- ongoing support can help to minimise distress or trauma, and enhance the wellbeing of those involved in the incident.

1.7 General Principles of School Recovery

A critical incident, or traumatic event, is defined as anything that is both extraordinary and beyond our normal ability to cope. Naturally, the specific situation will determine the actions a school will take. These actions will vary according to the degree to which the incident is public, the age of those affected by it, the extent of their involvement, and the degree of impact. Some general guidelines, however, are set out below.

Plan the response

The Principal or his delegate, will take responsibility for organising and coordinating recovery. This would involve calling together a crisis management team, including senior staff, school counsellors, chaplains, and other individuals or agencies as appropriate. It may also be the Principal's role to organise liaison with emergency services and/or the families of those affected.

Provide information to those affected by the trauma

The psychological beginning point in assuming some control over an event is understanding what happened. It is the Principal's task to provide information and facilitate appropriate venues for its dissemination. Students and teachers have a need to accept the reality of the event, and the inevitable discussions that follow are better based on fact than on rumour or supposition. It is important that rumours be discounted.
Resume normal routines as soon as possible

There is reassurance and safety in the predictability of normal routines. Once the event has been formally acknowledged - perhaps through meetings, a memorial service, or whatever is appropriate - the next step may well be to resume, as far as practicable, normal timetables, so that any on-going recovery strategies can take place against a background of predictability.

Assess the psychological/emotional needs of those affected

After a traumatic event, the people involved may need extra support. The nature of this support will vary amongst individuals but generally those closest to the incident will need more assistance than others. The Critical Incident Response Team, led by the Principal, in conjunction with the Critical Incident Stress Management Team, led by the Manager, Student Services, should determine the nature and degree of support needed. At a minimal level, this should mean providing accurate information about the event and its aftermath, and providing opportunities for those involved to mobilise effective coping strategies, including, if appropriate, the opportunity to express and share with others the reactions they had to the incident. Those in charge, and those helping, also need extra consideration during this time. Finally, some ritual or action of 'closure' may need to be planned.

1.8 Staff Training in Critical Incident Management

It is important for all staff to be well informed about the nature of the plan and feel confident in its implementation. It is also important that certain staff have specialist knowledge and skills to support each other and the school community. To this end Carey is committed to ongoing staff professional development in this area.

1.9 Whole of School Business Continuity

This plan forms part of the Business Continuity Plan at Carey.
SUMMARY OF CAREY'S CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

TIME FRAME

Immediate Response (1 hour)

Short Term Response (48 hours)
- Inform School Community
- Allocate Resources
- Liaise with Media
- Provide One-to-One Support
- Facilitate Stress Debriefing

Medium Term Response (2 weeks)
- Restore Normal Routine
- Provide Ongoing Support and Monitoring
- Conduct an Operational Debrief
- Provide Counselling and Referral
- Monitor Affected Individuals

Long Term Response (weeks to months)
- Respond to Legal/Insurance Issues
- Plan Commemorative Activities

Daily Meetings & Discussions
Critical Incident Response Team Members

- Principal (Co-ordinator)
- Deputy Principal
- Head/s of School (or Deputy)
- Manager Student Services
- Senior Chaplain
- Director of Human Resources
- Director Community Services
- Business Director
- Other Relevant Personnel
  e.g. Heads of House, Mentors, Class teachers

Critical Incident Stress Management Team Members

- Manager Student Services (Co-ordinator)
- School Counsellors
- Outside Mental Health Professionals - as needed
Section 2: Carey’s Critical Incident Management Plan

2.1 Information Gathering

The Principal’s Office should be notified immediately after a Critical Incident has occurred. The Principal (or his designated representative) will then confirm the incident and collect information about the incident from reliable sources as a matter of urgency.

Refer to Attachment B: Initial Critical Incident Record

2.2 Formation of the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

- The Principal (or the Principal’s delegate) will convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Response Team to plan an appropriate response to the incident. The CIRT members are:

  Principal (Response Coordinator)
  Deputy Principal
  Head/s of School
  Manager Student Services
  Senior Chaplain
  Director Human Resources
  Director Community Services
  Business Director
  Other relevant personnel

- The Principal will also activate the Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM). The CISM team will be coordinated by the Manager of Student Services. The CISM team members are:

  Manager Student Services (Coordinator)
  School Counsellors
  Outside Mental Health Professionals (as required)

Refer to Attachment C: Emergency Telephone Contact List

2.3 Tasks of the Critical Incident Response Team

Issues to be addressed in the initial meeting:

- contact the family or police to ascertain what information may be released within the school,
- prepare a factual written statement, without graphic detail, for use as a reference by teachers when discussing the incident with students,
- determine whether to tell students about the incident at a whole school assembly, by year levels or individual classes depending upon the nature of the incident,
- discuss with teachers who feel uncomfortable raising the event with students and arrange for support from another teacher or a member of the recovery team,
• identify staff who may be too distraught to take classes and arrange replacements from within the school, from neighbouring schools or casual teachers,
• inform students soon after briefing staff,
• ask teachers to mark a roll to identify who has been informed and who has not.

Having verified information:

• provide teachers and ancillary staff with a brief outline of the incident
• provide a brief factual outline to others within the school community on a need-to-know basis
• inform staff as soon as possible about a serious emergency involving death or injury which occurs after hours, on the weekend or during school holidays
• inform staff about arrangements for holding a briefing meeting before informing students at the start of the next school day.
• if relevant, inform staff that the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team will be managing the emotional response to the trauma and will be providing defusing, debriefing or one-to-one support to affected students and staff.

2.3.1 Informing the School Community

2.3.1.1 Staff

Refer to Attachment D - 'Phone Tree' Staff addresses and telephone contact numbers are available in Synergetic

Staff will probably require a special meeting to review information handouts, ask questions of concern, and collaborate on any proposed alterations to class work/curriculum.

The emergency staff meeting presents an opportunity to provide known facts, dispel rumours and to establish a common reference base. It also provides an opportunity to outline the preliminary recovery management arrangements.

Before the start of the school day

• verify and restate factual information about the incident, so that staff can understand what has happened and the information will sink in
• talk with staff about the reactions they may experience
• outline recovery management arrangements
• inform staff about procedures for dealing with the media
• discuss procedures to be followed by staff during the day
• discuss guidelines for informing their students and ways of answering questions from students
• provide teachers with a written summary for use as a reference when discussing the incident with students
• ensure that staff have time to have their questions answered and to talk about the incident amongst themselves.

Certain teachers or staff members may require special help. These staff members should not be expected to deal with the emotional problems of students if they are having difficulty managing their own response. Those teachers who feel uncomfortable with discussing the event should be assisted by a CIRT member or a peer or have such a person inform their class for them.

• if relevant, engage CISM Team to run defusing or debriefing sessions which will allow staff to share the trauma of the day
• identify students at risk who will require further follow-up by CISM Team
• provide opportunity for Critical Incident Response Team to debrief and review the day
• allow CIRT to debrief and gain relevant support.

2.3.1.2 Close friends and their families

• notify close friends and their families, including girlfriends or boyfriends, prior to making an announcement to other students
• take students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
• consider contacting the students or their families at home prior to the start of the school day
• ensure that individual attention is given to intimate friends who are likely to have special needs beyond those of other students.

2.3.1.3 Students who need to know

To ensure clarity and consistency of information, assemble students and outline the facts of the incident at the earliest opportunity. Whether the assembly is for the whole school, a whole year level, or class groupings, will depend on the nature and scope of the incident.

The classroom setting enables teachers to monitor individual reactions within a supportive environment. Death, injury or other significant emergencies are usually more effectively managed in a classroom setting rather than at a general assembly or over the public address system. Teachers should establish a climate of open communication to help students work through issues such as unresolved conflicts which traumatic events may cause to resurface.

Refer to Attachment A: Common Reactions to Traumatic Events

Refer to Attachment E:

E1 - Discussing a critical incident with classes
E2 - Short term tasks with students
E3 - Practical ideas for the classroom
E4 - Related Student Fiction

Refer to Attachment F: Coping with Suicide
In the classroom staff aim to:

- provide a factual account of the incident at the beginning of the first class, in a way that ensures that everyone hears the same information
- limit speculation and rumor by providing factual and relevant information about the incident
- inform students about the location of counselling services and recovery rooms inform students about arrangements for memorial services, funerals and appropriate ways to express condolences
- outline arrangements for the day.

2.3.1.4 Parents and the school community

Parents, School Board members, other members of the school community and neighbouring schools will want to know what has happened and to assist if possible. It is important that they are given factual information and that the information has been approved for public release.

- confirm the release of information with those directly affected and to the police
- send a letter to parents about the incident (refer to Attachment G: sample letters to the School Community)
- advise parents about the recovery arrangements which have been put in place
- provide copies of the Common Reactions to Trauma (refer to Attachment A: Common reactions to traumatic events)
- explain to parents that adolescents are likely to seek comfort from their peer group rather than their parents and adults
- provide a recovery room for parents and run parent briefings as required.

2.3.1.5 Managing International Students

In a critical incident which involves an International student the abovementioned procedures will apply. In addition the following additional communication procedure will be followed:

- Guardian is called by Deputy Head of Senior School – Pastoral
- Homestay host is called by Deputy Head of Senior School
- Parents, located overseas, are contacted by telephone by Head of Senior School, with a translator if necessary.

2.3.2 Allocating Resources

2.3.2.1 Managing telephone calls

Ensure that personnel responsible for taking incoming telephone calls are thoroughly briefed on:

- information to be given,
- to whom enquiries should be directed.

Notes should be kept of every incoming call: time, caller, recipient, details (if applicable). In particular, special note should be taken of calls from parents, and from the media.

2.3.2.2 Security
There may be the need to arrange for Security officers to monitor/restrict access to school grounds. In the interim, staff may be required to supervise the gates and ensure adequate security.

This role may be undertaken by the relevant authority, eg police or fire brigade, if they are involved.

A map of the school is to be available, in the Critical Incident Management Plan folder, to enable speedy allocation of response areas.

2.3.2.3 Setting up a recovery room

Assembly Points/Recovery Rooms need to be set up and staffed:

- to allow communication of relevant information, and provide space for upset students to take time out and/or to receive appropriate assistance.
- designate a room where people know they can quickly locate support staff
- ask for a staff volunteer, preferably with first aid knowledge, to supervise the recovery room and to support those who are very distressed
- monitor students for shock reactions and have someone available to provide first aid if required
- set up a student recovery room well away from classrooms, or several rooms during a large incident, close to toilets and with comfortable chairs and tissues
- provide a separate recovery room for staff
- allow distressed staff members and students reasonable access to the room
- ensure that several adults are available to monitor and assist students during a large or complex incident where a large number of students may be affected
- set aside a room for parents with tea and coffee making facilities, which is separate from students to avoid having them congregate around the school
- encourage students to gather in smaller friendship groups rather than larger groups
- keep a list of students who are attending the recovery room
- give students a task to undertake such as making a card or writing a letter to the injured person as soon as practicable
- contact parents of students who remain in the recovery room and alert them about possible concerns.

2.3.3 Liaising With the Media

From time to time the impact of some mass media reporting following a major critical incident or disaster has overwhelmed individuals and communities, generating enormous amounts of resentment and stress. In particular, the following have caused distress: the reporting of inaccurate information about the event; seemingly insensitive reporting of events, including distressing film footage, interviews or photographs; the harassment of individuals and families; an ongoing recurrence of reports and images from the disaster on news reports over a number of years; and the over-exposure of views of individuals which do not reflect those of the community concerned.

The conflicting time scales of the media, emergency services, and school communities can also create tensions for those waiting for news.

Media coverage, however, can provide accurate and helpful information about a critical incident and about sources of help. It can also evoke a necessary sense of value and significance to the event.
It can describe the process of grieving and give examples of how the community can help. It may also facilitate the grieving of the public at large through publicising and broadcasting memorial services. It may help raise funds. It can help some wrongs to be righted. Managing media interest at critical incidents has emerged as a major issue. Thought needs to be given in planning for critical incidents to optimise the media’s advantages and to restrain its excesses.

Ensure that adequate information, including facts and relevant responses are supplied to the Media. Release only facts - do not release unconfirmed information. Parental permission may need to be sought to release some information.

The Media should be informed by the **Principal in consultation with the Director of Community Services.**

Media contact with staff and students should be minimised - the Principal should provide the Media with clear guidelines for making any contact with staff or students. Where media interest is high, the school may choose to take the lead in media management by:

- calling a media conference - at a time and place suited to the school,
- arranging for relevant individuals to be available to the media for interview, eg students, staff, parents

The Principal should prepare the Media Release. It may be advisable for this to be reviewed by a legal representative.

**Refer to Attachment I: Preparing a media release**

A suitable room should be designated to hold Press Conferences.

All staff, especially the Receptionist, need to be briefed as how to handle questions from the media and how to deal with phone calls.

Experience relates that the Press/Media go to great lengths to obtain a story out of a newsworthy event. Authorities recommend that:

- (a) regarding the media as an ally, and
- (b) providing accurate, up-to-date statements,
  increase the likelihood that accurate reporting of the event will occur.

### 2.3.4 Restore Normal Routine

Medium-term recovery management requires school personnel charged with the responsibility of managing emergencies to restore school routine. At the same time, provision should be made for the ongoing support of members of the school community.

It is at this time that funerals and associated rituals take place and when people are often most emotionally vulnerable, yet wanting to return to normal.

**Refer to Attachment J: Funerals**
Parents are likely to discuss reactions their children are experiencing such as physical and emotional tiredness and degrees of sleep disturbance. Parents may need an opportunity to discuss their own tiredness and the need to protect their children after a life threatening event. Children may indicate a desire for the return of routine and normality. Most children grieve intermittently rather than continuously. There may be times when children seem to have forgotten the death or the emergency. Flashbacks can be triggered for months and years.
**Tasks during the first two weeks**

- provide information and encourage support networks among parents
- restore regular school routine
- allow opportunities to talk about the incident and reactions
- monitor and support reactions within the school community
- reiterate information about reactions as required
- use specialist support staff to assist staff, students and parents
- provide information updates about the condition of anyone in hospital
- prepare public expressions of farewell such as obituaries and wreaths when a death has occurred
- be aware of cultural and religious differences in response to death and what the funeral may entail
- keep parents informed, parents may wish to meet together
- monitor those in care giving roles
- consider referring students with persistent behaviour changes to a counsellor or specialist agency
- liaise with community support agencies such as churches, funeral directors, community health centres, police in schools units
- liaise with neighbouring schools
- keep a scrapbook of eulogies and sympathy cards in a central location for members of the school community to read
- monitor media coverage of the event to identify areas which may be causing difficulty or distress for students and staff
- refer staff who are concerned with issues of legal liability to professional associations
- suggest that staff make detailed notes for their personal reference about the event and their part in it.
- suggest that staff obtain copies of any official statements they make
- use replacement class room teachers to enable staff to attend the funeral.

**2.3.5 Conduct an Operational Debrief**

After routine is restored the CIRT members should be reconvened by the Principal in order to review the School’s response to the incident. This process is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the team’s response and to highlight areas for further development.

**2.3.6 Ongoing Support and Monitoring**

Support and monitoring is an ongoing process that begins after the incident occurs and can continue for months or years.
Early tasks

- provide information and encourage support networks among parents
- restore regular school routine
- allow opportunities to talk about the incident and reactions
- monitor and support reactions within the school community
- reiterate information about reactions as required
- use specialist support staff to assist staff, students and parents
- provide information updates about the condition of anyone in hospital
- prepare public expressions of farewell such as obituaries and wreaths when a death has occurred
- be aware of cultural and religious differences in response to death and what the funeral may entail
- keep parents informed, parents may wish to meet together
- monitor those in care giving roles
- consider referring students with persistent behaviour changes to a counsellor or specialist agency
- liaise with community support agencies such as churches, funeral directors, community health centres, police in schools units
- liaise with neighbouring schools
- keep a scrapbook of eulogies and sympathy cards in a central location for members of the school community to read
- monitor media coverage of the event to identify areas which may be causing difficulty or distress for students and staff
- refer staff who are concerned with issues of legal liability to professional associations
- suggest that staff make detailed notes for their personal reference about the event and their part in it.
- suggest that staff obtain copies of any official statements they make
- use replacement class room teachers to enable staff to attend the funeral.

Long-term recovery management requires a continuing awareness of individual needs and reactions and a process for managing those responses.

Recovery can take up to three years or even longer. Significant dates or events such as anniversaries, or the taking of annual school photos may bring about re-emergence of symptoms. Six months after the initial incident is a critical time.

The affected group may feel forgotten as time passes by and relationship problems may emerge. Those who were drawn together by a shared experience are likely to start pulling away from each other and establishing new networks. Family cohesion may be altered as different members grieve and respond differently.
Grief, longing and pain may be particularly strong or may return on anniversary dates such as birthdays, the date that the incident occurred, or other significant dates such as Christmas. Marking these days may be helpful in giving concrete expression to such feelings.

Individuals may continue responding to triggers that remind them of the event for a long time. Hot, windy days often unsettle people who have experienced bushfires for many years after the experience.

Media may continue to use footage of an event for years, especially when a similar event occurs. This may be distressing and unsettling for some people. Reactions may appear weeks or months later and could be triggered by another loss.

Children will grieve more intermittently and over a longer period of time than an adult. The intensity of the emotions cannot be sustained for very long, so children will let the grief go, allowing it to return in small spurts.

**Ongoing monitoring tasks**

- consider the significance of anniversaries and plan commemorative activities if appropriate
- monitor students for signs of change including relationship problems, drug dependency, hyper arousal, increased susceptibility to illness and accidents
- prepare people for coronial inquests and legal proceedings providing them with knowledge about what to expect
- review the curriculum and include or enhance life skills programs and bereavement education where appropriate
- acknowledge the work of school-based and specialist care givers and continue to monitor their well-being, particularly when things start to quieten down and they may start to reveal their own views about the experience
- inform any new teacher about the child’s or the class’s experience and possible triggers which may cause a re-emergence of symptoms
- alert regular specialist support staff about any concerns regarding students or other members of the school community.

### 2.4 Critical Incident Stress Management Team

#### 2.4.1 Aims of Critical Incident Stress Management

Critical Incident Stress Management was originally designed to assist emergency services personnel in managing stress after traumatic incidents. CISM concepts and interventions have been adapted to be made relevant for use at Carey. This process has been carefully considered in consultation with CISM experts in Australia.

CISM interventions provide opportunities for those involved in, or affected by, critical incidents to work through or review the impact of the event. Varying approaches are available, according to the
nature and seriousness of the event, the level of involvement, and the degree of impact, on various members of the school community.

CISM interventions aim to:

- mitigate the impact of the Critical Incident,
- accelerate return to normal functioning, and
- facilitate the provision of support to those affected.

They achieve this by allowing participants to clarify the facts; discuss their concerns and feelings; learn about normal reactions to trauma; and discover some important strategies for coping.

CISM interventions provide an opportunity for stress reduction, education, and emotional reassurance. It can enhance group cohesiveness and cooperation and serve as an opportunity for identifying those requiring further assistance or referral. Staff, in particular, should be given the opportunity to review their own and the schools responses to any critical incident. These interventions may need to occur daily (preferably at the end of the school day) in the first days following an incident. Further, they should occur within school time to ensure that all staff can attend – no-one should be precluded because of other responsibilities eg picking up their own children after school.

In some cases it will be advisable to provide intervention strategies (such as information/debriefing/counselling) for parent groups. In such circumstances, a gathering point or meeting space should be designated and advertised amongst parents. It is important that parents have the opportunity to know and clarify the facts relating to the incident.

### 2.4.2 Role of the School Counsellors

The School Counsellors, led by the Manager of Student Services, will oversee the CISM response to the incident. The School Counsellors will organise and facilitate formal group interventions (such as stress debriefings and defusing) and will engage in one-to-one follow up, counselling, referral and monitoring of individuals affected by an incident. The Manager of Student Services will take a key role in organising the CISM response and supporting the School Counsellors.

### 2.4.3 Critical Incident Stress Management Interventions

CISM interventions are the programs and strategies aimed at assisting people affected by critical incidents. CISM includes a variety of traumatic stress interventions including:

- pre-incident education
- disaster preparedness
- defusings
- demobilisations
- debriefings
- on-scene support services
- follow-up services
- community outreach programs
- individual counselling
- peer counselling
- crisis intervention training
2.4.4.1 Demobilisation

A demobilisation is a brief intervention used immediately after a large scale incident. It aims to provide a transition period between the incident and the return to routine events. A demobilisation involves gathering together the people who have been responding to the incident and providing them with information about critical incident stress, symptoms of stress and suggestions about responding to stress over the next 24-72 hours. It will be followed by formal debriefings several days later.

2.4.4.2 Defusings

A defusing is a small group process run by trained staff from the CISM team. Defusings can be conducted with groups of affected people such as staff, students or parents. Defusings take place soon after a traumatic event (within 8 hours) and usually last around one hour. Defusings aim to reduce intense reactions, normalise experiences and re-establish social networks. They also allow the CISM team to determine if formal debriefing is required.

2.4.4.3 Stress Debriefings

Stress Debriefing is the term used to describe the formal, structured psychological debriefing that occurs in a small group and is run by trained debriefers from the CISM team. Stress Debriefing is an action-oriented crisis intervention process with a formal structured protocol. It aims to prevent or reduce the impact of traumatic stress following a traumatic event. Debriefings also aim to accelerate normal recovery process in normal people who are experiencing normal reactions to totally abnormal events. Debriefings are held between 24 and 72 hours after the event and are more likely to be organised after more serious incidents.
Attachments A - J

Practical Resources for Staff
Attachment A: Common Reactions to Traumatic Events

School personnel and others may experience strong emotional responses during an emergency. It is important for principals and teachers to constantly assess the impact of the emergency on themselves and others. It is equally important to take conscious and deliberate steps to minimise the impact of any response which is likely to reduce personal or work performance.

Principals and teachers may be affected directly by their exposure to the emergency. They may also be affected because of their close association with other staff or students who have been affected. Some staff may be directly involved in the activity to resolve the emergency, while others may be expected to re-establish and maintain school routines, leaving the direct management of emergency activity to others.

Anyone who is directly or indirectly involved in an emergency, including teachers, ancillary staff, children, families and those with helping roles may experience one or several common reactions to trauma. Many people report feeling switched on and in a state of readiness to react to a potential threat at all times. This is one of many normal trauma responses which may include:

- over reaction to minor issues
- disorganised thought processes
- sleep disturbance
- general anxiety
- impaired memory storage.

The reactions may be reflected in:

- a tendency for an all or nothing response
- difficulty experienced by a class teacher in concentrating and in managing the day-to-day tasks of teaching
- loss of confidence or self-esteem, difficulty in making decisions
- intrusive nightmares and thoughts about the event
- reassessment of the meaning of life goals and values
- the use of coping mechanism such as social withdrawal, alcohol, drugs, major life changes, which may in fact worsen the situation and impede recovery.
# Common Reactions to Traumatic Events

## In the Pre-School years

### Physical Reactions
- Sleep disturbance
- Bowel and bladder difficulties
- Small ailments requiring comforting
- Acute awareness of things and events
- General arousal
- Increased jumpiness and uneasiness

### Impact on Thinking
- Reduced attention span
- Reduced ability to play constructively
- Active fantasy life, may replay the event and change the details

### Behavioural Reactions
- Tearfulness
- Unwillingness to be left alone
- Aggression
- Fearfulness
- Anxiety
- Overactive behaviour/ restlessness
- Apathy
- Lack of cooperation
- Irritability
- Return to younger behaviour
- Excessive concern for others
- Difficulty coping with change
- Display of awareness of events beyond age expectations, particularly in play

### First Aid Support
**Provide:**
- support, rest, comfort
- structured environment where the rules are clear
- realistic, age appropriate information about the event
- time to draw and play
- ongoing, consistent care
- a predictable routine
- security and reassurance to counter separation anxiety
- Monitor the child and note any change in temperament and behaviour
In the lower primary school years

### Physical Reactions
- Change in eating habits
- Nausea
- Sleep disturbances
- Bowel and bladder problems
- Clumsiness
- Headaches
- Small ailments requiring comforting

### Impact on Thinking
- Precoccupation with trauma
- Reduced attention span
- Reduced ability to play constructively
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Seeing the event over and over
- Compensatory themes in play which may involve killing the perpetrator or creating a super hero for retribution
- Anxiety related in incomplete understanding of death.

### Behavioural Reactions
- Tearfulness
- Unwillingness to be left alone
- Confusion
- Aggression
- Fearfulness
- Lie telling
- Anxiety
- Generalised anger
- Overactive behaviour, restlessness
- Lack of cooperation
- Irritability
- Return to younger behaviour
- Reduction in talking
- Excessive concern for others
- Difficulty coping with change
- Display of awareness beyond age expectations
- Acute awareness of things and events
- Helplessness – passive responses
- Difficulty identifying what is wrong
- Sensitivity to media coverage

### First Aid Support

Provide:
- support, rest, comfort
- structured environment where the rules are clear
- realistic, age appropriate information about the event
- time to draw and play
- ongoing, consistent care
- a predictable routine
- security and reassurance to counter separation anxiety
- Monitor the child and note any change in temperament and behaviour
In the upper primary school years

**Physical Reactions**
- Headaches
- Visual and perceptual problems
- Sleep disturbances
- Nausea
- Skin problems
- Reckless behaviour

**Impact on Thinking**
- Interference with concentration and learning
- Distortion of the event
- Fear of ghosts
- Preoccupation with the traumatic event
- Impaired memory and recall
- Intrusive recollections
- Preoccupation with revenge

**Behavioural Reactions**
- Preoccupation with own actions during the event
- Specific fears set off by reminders or when alone
- Retelling or replaying the event
- Reluctance to express feelings
- Concern about own and others safety
- Reckless, invulnerable behaviour
- Interest in parents response to the event
- Concern for parents recovery
- Disturbed grief responses
- Reluctance to disturb parents with own anxieties
- Refusal to go to school
- Excessive concern for victims and their families
- Competition with brothers and sisters
- Displaced anger, aggression
- Insecurity
- Regressive behaviour
- Failure to perform responsibilities
- Emotional labelling of common reactions

**First-Aid Support**
- Provide support, rest and comfort
- Provide realistic, age appropriate information about event and address the distortions
- Provide time to talk about events, fears, dreams
- Help identify traumatic reminders and anxieties and encourage children not to generalise
- Develop a supportive environment that allows the expression of anger, sadness
- Confirm that these feelings are normal
- Encourage support networks
- Identify physical sensations felt during the event
- Encourage constructive activities on behalf of injured or deceased
- Help child to retain positive memories when working through intrusive traumatic memories
- Provide a structured and predictable environment to provide a sense of security
- Monitor the child and note any changes in temperament and behaviour
- Encourage child to let significant others know about the event
In the adolescent/pre-adolescent years:

**Physical Reactions**
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Appetite disorders
- Sleep disorders
- Skin disorders

**Impact on Thinking**
- Recall of vivid disturbing images
- Radical attitude changes
- Memory disorders
- Poor concentration
- Cognitive distortion of the event
- Preoccupation with trauma

**Behavioural Reactions**
- Decreased school performance
- Attention seeking
- Rebellion at school or at home
- Competition with brothers or sisters
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Lack of emotion
- Need to repeatedly go over details of event
- Detachment, shame, guilt
- Fear of being labelled abnormal
- Self-consciousness about emotional responses (fear and vulnerability)
- Increase in self-destructive, accident prone behaviour (drugs, sexual)
- Life threatening re-enactment
- Premature entrance into adulthood or inhibition to leave home
- Strong identification with peers
- Mood swings
- Need to conform with peers in response to event
- Truancy

**First-Aid Support**
- Provide support, rest and comfort
- Provide realistic, age appropriate information about the event and address the distortions
- Encourage discussion of the event emphasising realistic limitations of what could have been done
- Encourage peer acceptance and understanding of emotional responses
- Provide information about safe ways of relieving psychological discomfort
- Encourage postponing radical life decisions
- Link attitude changes to the impact of the event
- Acknowledge significance of event for them
- Encourage support networks
- Encourage constructive activities on part of injured or deceased
- Help to hold on to positive memories as they work through the more intrusive traumatic events
- Encourage student to let significant others know about the event
Attachment B: Initial Critical Incident Record

Date ……………………………………………………………………………

Time of notification …………………………………………………

Name of person taking the call ……………………………………………………………

Position ……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Name of person reporting the incident ……………………………………Tel: ……………

DETAILS

What happened?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Time?

Location?

Who witnessed it - staff/student/other?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Actions taken - at scene/elsewhere?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Anyone hospitalised?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Types of injury?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Where is everyone now?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS REQUIRED

Principal notified  YES  NO  Time ……………

Other school staff  YES  NO  Time ……………

Emergency services notified  YES  NO  Time …………

(which services, record names of officers, stations, telephone contacts)
# Attachment C: Emergency Telephone Contact List

**August, 2010**

## Who to contact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency</th>
<th>External</th>
<th>Internal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>Fire Brigade 000</td>
<td>Michael Calder/David Dannock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Injury</td>
<td>Ambulance 000</td>
<td>Susan Rennie/Philip Grutzner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break-in/Theft</td>
<td>Police 000</td>
<td>Michael Calder/David Dannock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Vehicle Accident</td>
<td>Police/Ambulance 000</td>
<td>Philip Grutzner/David Dannock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security - Alarms</td>
<td>SCAT 9331 0110</td>
<td>Michael Calder/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David Dannock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security - Patrols (general)</td>
<td>Wilsons - 1300 945 766</td>
<td>Michael Calder/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David Dannock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kew Roving Patrol (3.30pm to 11pm Mon - Fri Only)</td>
<td>0477 300 119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Phone numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mobile / After Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Philip Grutzner 0418 303 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Principal</td>
<td>Elisabeth Lenders 0411 233 054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of School</td>
<td>James Brown 0437 584 552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Darralyn Cusack 0409 946 248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Libby Russell 0417 307 017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior, Kew</td>
<td>Jon Abbott 0425 773 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>Michael Calder 0425 719 997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulleen</td>
<td>Erin Cugley 0403 245 955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Director</td>
<td>David Dannock 0403 245 955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Committee/Sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toonallook/Outdoor Ed</td>
<td>Paul Jepson 0403 245 953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dir. Human Resources</td>
<td>Dorothy Tselios 0403 245 970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>Susan Rennie 0425 773 010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Officer</td>
<td>Peter Schiller 0425 773 011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Officer</td>
<td>Gary Rees 0425 753 783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager - Student Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kay Rogers 0425 747 533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dir. Comm. Services</td>
<td>Peter Robson 0425 813 594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>Scott Bramley 0417 337 530</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Police Station                | Kew 8851 1111             |
| Police Station                | Doncaster 8841 3999       |

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Department of Education
Emergency and Security Management
24-hour Communications Centre
9589 6266
Attachment D: Phone Tree

The purpose of a phone tree is to communicate with people affected by a crisis (students, families, staff). The advantages of a phone tree are that a message can be given quickly, personally, and specifically, and that in certain cases, staff can be better prepared emotionally before they arrive on campus. A phone tree can be designed for each section of the School, thereby achieving efficient and effective communication.

Approximately 700 people could be contacted by this method.
In Senior School we have in place the following contact system.

Once the Head of School has been contacted by the Deputy Principal the Deputy Head–Curriculum and Deputy Head–Pastoral Care will be informed. They will then contact five Heads of House each. The Heads of House will in turn contact two Mentors each. A short briefing will be held so that common information is communicated and then, depending on the circumstances, a combination of House staff will contact staff/parents.

The telephone tree is designed to:

1. Allow flexibility for numbers of contact staff required (depending on the circumstances)
2. Provide the most effective and efficient means of contacting staff/parents.
3. Allow a common message to be transmitted to all contacts.
Middle School has two Telephone Trees:

On receiving information the Head of Middle School contacts Deputy Heads and Administration staff. The two Deputies then each contact 5 of the 10 House Heads and other staff as below. Heads of House then contact their Mentors (M1 and M2) and the House parent (HP) for their mentor group. Each mentor will contact their House parent and the process continues as below: Parents.
Middle School has two Telephone Trees:

In Middle School, we have in place a set of House Mentor parent representatives. Each Mentor group (10 at each of the 3 year levels=30) has a parent representative (HP) who has a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers for all parents in that group. Each tutor group has then nominated 4 of the parents (P1) who would be contacted by the parent representative who would then contact 4 other parents (P2).

In this way, all Middle School parents can be contacted by 3 sets of phone calls, with no parent making more than 4 calls.

The telephone tree is designed to:

1. Advise parents of parent/school activities
2. Gain feedback from parents on an issue
3. Transmit emergency messages
At Carey, Kew we have in place a set of Junior School Parents’ Association Class Representatives. Parents (or parents) volunteer to take on this role at the beginning of each year for each class. A Year Level Co-ordinator is also appointed for each class level to liaise with the President and Class Representatives. They then attend regular meetings and keep all parents in their class informed on matters concerning them, under the guidance of the J.S.P.A. President.

Class representatives have a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers for all parents in their child’s class. It is envisaged that each class would have a minimum of 2 Class Representatives.

To contact all parents, Class Representatives (CR) would contact two parents each (P1) who, in turn, would contact three parents each (P2). The number of contacts would vary according to the number of children in the class.

In this way all parents can be contacted by three or four sets of phone calls with no parent having to make a large number of calls. The telephone tree is designed to:

- Advise parents of parent/school activities.
- Gain feedback from parents on an issue
- Transmit emergency messages
At Carey Donvale, we have in placed a set of Class Representatives. Two parents are selected at the beginning of each year for each class and they attend parents’ meetings and keep all parents in their class informed of matters concerning them, under the guidance of the CDPA President.

Class representatives have a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers for all parents in their child’s class.

The two class representatives (CR) would contact two parents each (P1) who, in turn, would contact three parents each (P2). The number of contacts would vary according to the number of children in the class.

This way, all Donvale School parents can be contacted by three sets of phone calls, without a parent making more than 4 calls.

The telephone tree is designed to:

- Advise parents of parent/school activities
- Gain feedback from parents on an issue
- Transmit emergency messages
Attachment E1: Discussing a Critical Incident with Classes

When something distressing has happened at a school or within a school community there is usually at least one class group that is particularly affected, and in need of support.

Practical ideas for use with all groups

1. Let the students tell their understandings of what happened.
2. Discuss what actually happened: give facts, and sort out rumours from facts.
3. Allow discussion time: e.g. where were you when it happened? How did you find out? What did you feel? How might significant others feel? What rumours have you heard about the (fire/accident/whatever)? etc.

The attribution of blame can be quite difficult to handle. Instead, try to incorporate discussion of what can constructively be done now.
4. Some students like to write or draw - to recall events, people, emotions. Clay is also a useful medium.
5. Help the class and teachers plan how they will reintroduce and support survivors/victims when they return to school or during their absence (e.g. letters, drawings, company etc.)
6. Offer personal counselling and tell the class where you'll be in the school for the next few hours and/or how appointments may be made.

Practical ideas for use with Adolescents and Adults

1. For adolescents and teachers, group discussions can be important and useful. They allow time to express and rationalise reactions - and it is helpful if the teachers and adolescents share their reactions. "Crazy" thoughts, extreme emotions such as helplessness, frustration, anger, and survivor guilt, may need to be recognised and vented.
2. It is important and useful to end discussions on a positive and practical note, as follows:
   - What heroic acts were observed?
   - What can we do immediately - e.g. prepare memorial service, practical support for victims and families,
   - What can we do in the longer term? e.g. plan for disaster prevention.

Action Plan:

Who is going to do what, and when?

Plan a follow up time. Offer individual counselling, or referral. State what help is available, and that it is O.K. to seek help. Peer support can be valuable if peers are emotionally able to handle it.
3. If moved to tears, don’t be afraid to let other students/teachers see - the expression of emotion can validate the responses of others and the expression of these responses, and thus be very supportive.

**Attachment E2: Short Term Tasks with Students**

There will be wide range of reactions to the news of an incident, injury or death. Some students may be visibly affected while others may show no sign of distress. Dealing with, and responding to, news of an emergency is a very individual experience. Individual characteristics, such as how a person interprets the event, previous experiences and the relationship to the injured or deceased are all factors that influence how people will respond.

Young children and adolescents can be traumatised by what they hear from others about an incident. Use **protective interrupting** strategies if a story or details become too graphic for some students. Protective interrupting requires the teacher to stop an anecdote being told in a public forum. It may be possible to change the direction of a discussion by distracting or diverting the student. The student should be given an opportunity to tell the story in a more appropriate setting alone with the teacher.

**It is useful to:**

- allow opportunities to talk about the incident and reactions, taking the opportunity to explain that different people respond in different ways
- explain that a range of reactions may be experienced, that the reactions are normal, that people react in a range of ways and with time and support the reactions will ease
- repeat the facts as often as requested
- allow students to opt out of discussion
- encourage older children to talk and to piece together a clear picture of what happened
- use the natural tendency of children to repeatedly question what happened as a useful means of dispelling rumors and myths.

**Short term tasks - supporting students**

**When providing support to students try to:**

- provide support and comfort
- sit quietly with the child, say little, accept silence
- accept initial emotional reactions
- use minimal prompts such as ‘you’ve had a frightening experience’
- tell children that you are sorry such an event occurred and you want to understand and assist them
- provide information about what has happened and what is being done to help use active listening and empathy skills
- be alert for anyone who appears to be in shock who may need medical attention acknowledge the experience and normalise the reactions ‘you've had a frightening experience, no wonder your hands are shaking’
• bring a calm presence to the situation
• provide ongoing support to individuals when they receive additional information such as notification of deaths, or when collecting personal effects
• ensure that support is available at home before the student leaves the scene
• be guided by the child and listen to what the individual wants
• start from the children’s point of understanding
• ask children to tell you what happened in their own words
• allow opportunity for play, some children seek to get a better understanding of what happened through play
• allow children to talk over concerns with someone they have chosen, including another teacher
• respect the need for adolescents to seek support from their peer group and to be with their friends rather than with adults.

Try to avoid statements in which students are told:

• it will be all right because it may not be
• they are lucky it wasn’t worse as such statements rarely console anyone who is traumatised
• about death using abstract explanations or euphemisms, gone to sleep, passed away
• how they are feeling.
Attachment E3: Practical Ideas for the Classroom

Children and adolescents need to give concrete expression to their trauma and grief. The following activities may be useful in helping children come to terms with the event.

- Answer children’s questions simply and directly. If the questions are too hard or seem inappropriate or it is distressing to answer them, ask the child to suggest an answer. This can help both teacher and child start to discuss the feeling behind the question being asked.
- Talk with students about what made that person special.
- Make cards or drawings expressing how sad they feel and maybe include a special memory of that person.
- Create a memory box where students can write a memory of that person and store them in the box.
- Write goodbye letters.
- Make an audio tape using a starter such as *What I’d like to say to...........was special because.*
- Compile a collection of edited student drawings about their classmate and present it to the child’s parents.
- Collect photographs of the child at the school and present them to the child’s parents, e.g. class, excursion, concert, sporting photos.
- Provide a special place within the school where students and staff can place memorials and tributes.
- Set up an aquarium in the classroom with tadpoles to discuss life cycles.
- Use story books and novels to discuss life events.
- Make up a story book about the child.
- Allocate a sports trophy or award in the name of the deceased.
- Organise a tribute or commemorative activity such as planting a special plant or laying a plaque.
- Prepare the rest of the class for the return of students affected by the emergency.
- Use journal writings as a way of monitoring a student’s responses.
- Collect and donate money to specific charities or illness foundations when a student has died from a terminal illness.
- Discuss the cause of the event as a lead into prevention and preparedness issues.
- Mobilise support from friends, let them discuss how they can support their friend.
- Engage in accident prevention activities.
- Use student’s desk as a focal point for memorials, tributes and good byes.
- Use photos for memorial activities, particularly with intellectual impaired students.
- Make a colouring book about the event.
- Consider grief and loss education programs provided by grief associations or funeral homes.
- Write personal biographies as a class activity with chapter headings which could include: *My Parents, Grandparents, Brothers and Sisters, Family Tree, Family Gatherings, Birthdays and Weddings.*
- Make use of personal safety **feelings posters** to discuss the range of emotions or make your own feelings posters in class.
• Use **strength cards** to compile a list of the special things about the student.
Attachment E4: Related Student Fiction

Resources for teachers

Primary fiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aliki</td>
<td>Feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buchanan Smith, D</td>
<td>A Taste of Blackberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croser, J</td>
<td>Tiddycat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis Stilz, C</td>
<td>Kirsty’s Kite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denton, T</td>
<td>School for Laughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleck Cardy, A</td>
<td>Dusty Was My Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fox, M</td>
<td>Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamston, J</td>
<td>Sam’s Grandpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt, N and Kubbos, A</td>
<td>The Dove Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meltonie, B and Ingpen, R</td>
<td>Beginnings, Endings with Lifetimes in Between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles, S</td>
<td>Alfi and the Dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, K</td>
<td>Dear Nanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsend, M and Stern, R</td>
<td>Pop’s Secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viorst, Z</td>
<td>The Tenth Good Thing about Barney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagner, J</td>
<td>John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis, J</td>
<td>The Monster Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zolotow, C</td>
<td>My Grandson Lew</td>
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Upper primary/secondary fiction

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bennet-Blackburn, L</td>
<td>The Class in Room 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blume, J</td>
<td>Tiger Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Branfield, J</td>
<td>The Fox in Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craven, M</td>
<td>I Heard an Owl Call My Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day, D</td>
<td>Are You Listening Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gleitzman, M</td>
<td>Two Weeks with the Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowry, L</td>
<td>A Summer to Die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love, L</td>
<td>So Much to Tell You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson, K</td>
<td>Bridge to Terabithia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voigt, C</td>
<td>Tell Me if Lovers are Losers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, EB</td>
<td>Charlotte’s Web</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zindel, B and P</td>
<td>A Star for the Latecomer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Attachment F: Coping with Suicide**

**Helping students cope after a suicide**

Suicide, like other forms of sudden death and trauma affects the whole school community. Managing recovery after a suicide is especially difficult as it is often surrounded by taboos, myths and secrecy.

The secrecy that often surrounds suicide develops a climate in which it is difficult for students to gain assistance with their own reactions and depression. Schools that manage the event successfully are likely to be less at risk of copycat suicides or related risk taking behaviours.

It is important for teachers to monitor students who may be at high risk following a suicide, particularly those who show extreme reactions, are particularly close to the deceased or who have had previous traumas in their lives. Students may express feelings of guilt or responsibility for the death. It is valuable to emphasise that suicide was the choice of the person.

**Short term tasks**

- Where possible, check with parents to determine what information can be released.
- Inform staff about the death and discuss ways of dealing with students.
- Inform students about the death in an honest and sensitive manner.
- Be aware of affected brothers and sisters, close friends, girlfriends or boyfriends.
- Provide unambiguous information to staff and students which will dispel rumours.
- Avoid providing excessive detail about the method used to bring about the death, the motivation, family reaction.
- Do not glorify or romanticise the death or encourage others to do so.
- Try to dispel any myths that students may express about the death *he must have been brave to kill himself*.
- Encourage discussion which emphasises that the person chose to commit suicide.
- Discourage students from apportioning or accepting blame.
- Use active listening skills to support students who want to talk about the death.
- Wait for students to raise issues rather than forcing discussion when they may not be ready to do so.
- Provide students with information about grief reactions and the grieving process.
- Emphasise that grief reactions are normal and that they will disappear over time.
- Reassure students that there is no right way to feel or react in these circumstances.
- Encourage students to talk to their parents about the suicide.
- Provide information to students and parents about support services which are available through the school and the community.
- Identify a recovery room where students can go if they need a quiet area.
- Monitor students to identify those who may need support - particularly those who show extreme reactions, are close to the dead person or are known to have had traumatic experiences of their own.
- Monitor anyone who seems particularly withdrawn and be aware of the potential for copycat behaviour.
Medium term tasks

- Continue to monitor those students who are most affected or at highest risk.
- Encourage students to use networks of friends.
- Discuss with students how they might support one another.
- Provide staff with information about warning signs and risk factors.
- Ensure that provision is made for staff to deal with their own grief.
- Prepare staff and students for the funeral.

Long term tasks

- Continue to monitor the school community over the long term.
- Be aware of the significance and sensitivity which surrounds anniversaries, sporting events, school photos.
- Review the school’s response to death and suicide and accommodate changes to the curriculum and personal development policies where appropriate.

Suicide - A Theological Perspective

The family, friends and staff who have known the person who has suicide, often question, ‘What is this person's place before God?’

The following could be part of a response to the above question:

- When a person takes their own life, we know that they are overwhelmed at the time, by either depression, a psychiatric illness, or severe emotional pain, which they want to stop.

- At the time, their emotional disturbance interferes with their normal mental functioning. They are unable to contemplate alternative positive solutions to their problems. However we cannot condone suicide and it is a poor choice.

- We know that God does not condemn people experiencing such severe distress. It is with that knowledge that we entrust the person to the mercy and compassion of our loving God.
Attachment G: Sample Letters to the School Community

Sample letters to parents from the principal

Prompt communication with all parents in the school following an emergency will help them to understand what has happened and will also help to dispel rumors which can be extremely destructive. If possible, an information letter should be sent to all parents within twenty-four hours of the emergency. Further information could be communicated to parents as an information item in the school’s regular newsletter or as a special newsletter about the emergency.

Information to be included in the letter should be verified for accuracy and confirmed as available for public release with police and legal representatives. In some cases, police or others may not want certain information to be published, even though it may be widely circulating informally within the school community.

Each of the sample letters has five functions. It tells parents

1. The facts
2. What the school has done
3. The school’s plans
4. How their children may react
5. How to get help
Sample letter - Death

*(can be modified to suit accident, death or suicide)*

Date

Dear Parents,

Early on Sunday morning three current students and a former student of our School were involved in a traffic accident on the Eastern Freeway. Two students were tragically killed and one critically injured.

We have spoken with the parents of all concerned and offered them the heartfelt sympathy of our whole school community as well as any support or help we are able to give.

We have been reassured by the care and concern demonstrated by students, teachers and parents in the support offered at this difficult time. Also, we have in place at school a support system which involves the School Counsellors, the School Chaplain, and other members of our Critical Incident Management Team who are available to provide assistance to our School community.

Your children may be affected by this tragic event in many ways. Reactions may include crying, not wanting to talk, wanting to talk, anger, wanting to be alone, lack of concentration, sleeping or eating problems. We encourage you to be sensitive with your child and to call me or our school counsellor (telephone no. .................) if we can help.

There is no doubt that we have all been saddened by this event, but it would be best for school procedures to continue as normally as possible when students return to school and for students to attend each day.

We have planned a parent meeting on Wednesday, 12 March at 7.00 pm in the MGH, where we can talk about the forthcoming memorial service and any other related issues that concern you.

Yours sincerely

…………………………….

Principal
Sample letter - Disaster

(can be modified to suit building destruction or disaster)

Date

Dear Parents

I want to inform you about the damage caused to the School by the weekend windstorms, and to assure you that we are doing everything possible to minimise the effects on our community.

The worst affected area has been the Junior School, which had extensive roof damage when an uprooted tree fell on it, and was then further damaged by rain which soaked the classrooms of the Years 3 and 5. A temporary covering has been placed on the roof to prevent further damage, the tree has been removed and we are currently awaiting the results of safety inspections, before we can know when the rest of the Junior School can be attended. Other areas of the School suffered only superficial damage, and are already fully functional.

In the meantime, students of the Junior School are to attend School as normal, where their class teachers will explain where they are to go till the building has been repaired. We have erected temporary classrooms on the Sandell Oval to accommodate all children affected. We also have in place, a Crisis Incident Management Team who will be coordinating all responses to this disastrous event.

We urge you to reassure your children in the present circumstances, and to let them know that they will be returning to their usual rooms as soon as it is safe. If they have been upset by these events, please encourage them to talk and to express themselves in other ways, such as drawing or writing about their feelings. If you feel you need assistance, please call the School. We have staff with specialist training to help you further.

Yours sincerely


Principal
Sample letter - Incident

(can be modified to suit sexual offences or violence)

Date

Dear Parents

A recent event has occurred which has affected the entire school community, and the details are included in this letter, so that you may know the facts as opposed to any rumours you may have heard. I would also like to assure you that everything is being done to minimise the negative effects this may have on the students, and to suggest ways in which individual students may be helped.

Yesterday, a child in Year 6 made charges of inappropriate sexual behaviour against one of the teachers. The charge involved fondling and kissing, and the police are investigating. In the meantime, the teacher concerned has been indefinitely suspended, pending the outcome of the investigation, and a replacement teacher commences tomorrow. The child is receiving professional support and counselling.

Obviously, this incident has shocked us all. Regardless of the outcome of the charges, we have all been troubled by the accusation. We have made available counsellors, teachers, and other resources so that students and staff can get help when they need it. I have also spoken to the student body and encouraged them to report to me any behaviour by others that makes them feel unsafe. At this stage, it appears unlikely that any other children have been involved.

You can help your children in two important ways. Firstly, reassure them that they are safe and will continue to be safe in this School. Listen to their fears, no matter how groundless you feel them to be. Secondly, be a model of fairness. The teacher concerned is innocent, and will remain so until (or if) proved guilty. It is reasonable to feel angry; it is not reasonable to blame someone who may not have done anything wrong. Parents or students who feel they need further assistance, can contact the School where they will be put in touch with a member of the Critical Incident Response Team, who will arrange for appropriate help.

We have planned a parent meeting on Wednesday, 2 April at 7.00 pm in the MGH. At that meeting, we can talk more about this situation, and I will update you on any new developments.

Yours sincerely

……………………………….
Principal
Refer to Attachment I:

Maps of School Properties

Donvale,

Bulleen,

Kew,

Toonallook
Prepare a media release containing about three paragraphs that has been verified for accuracy and checked with police and family.

- **paragraph 1** briefly outline the verified facts
- **paragraph 2** outline what the school has done to assist those
- **paragraph 3** outline support and recovery arrangements
- include a name and contact number for the school media coordinator
- fax the release to chiefs of staff of major media outlets.

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**CAREY BAPTIST GRAMMAR SCHOOL**  
349 BARKERS ROAD  
KEW  3101

ALL CORRESPONDENCE  
TO THE PRINCIPAL

THREE STUDENTS AND A FORMER STUDENT FROM CAREY BAPTIST GRAMMAR SCHOOL DIED AND ONE WAS CRITICALLY INJURED WHEN THE CAR THEY WERE TRAVELLING IN CRASHED ON THE EASTERN FREEWAY IN THE EARLY HOURS OF SUNDAY MORNING.

THE CAREY CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM HAVE BEEN WORKING WITH STAFF TO IDENTIFY THOSE WHO MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THIS TRAUMATIC EVENT.

A RECOVERY PLAN WILL BE PUT IN PLACE TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

ANY MEDIA ENQUIRIES TO THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO  
........................ ON  9816 1222.
Attachment J: Funerals

Funeral arrangements

Ongoing recovery strategies are crucial to the overall well-being of staff and students and, therefore, to the optimal functioning of the School. Close attention should be paid to the development of an on-going recovery plan.

Rituals serve an important function for both adults and children. These rituals assist in:

- reducing unreality
- counteracting fantasies
- getting some understanding of what is happening
- helping individuals to work through the event
- saying goodbye
- establishing a shared understanding of the event.

Viewing the body

In some cultures, viewing the body is seen as an important part of the ritual. Students can be helped through this process by an adult who is able to describe what they will see when they enter the room. An adult who enters the room first to see the dead person is then able to describe the room to those students who wish to view the body. The description can also include the casket and how the appearance of the dead person may have changed, e.g. visually and in terms of touch and temperature change. It is equally important for adults to be prepared for this experience.

Attending the funeral

It is generally beneficial for children to attend the funeral, although they should not be forced to attend against their wishes. Before the funeral the child should be given a detailed description of:

- what will happen
- what the room will look like
- what the casket will look like
- information about the service
- what the burial will entail
- possible adult reactions during the rituals
- how they might feel themselves.

It may be helpful to invite the minister or priest conducting the service to be available to answer students’ questions and to describe the planned ceremony.

Some families are willing to allow classmates to assist in planning the rituals. They may be able to participate in the ceremony by reading eulogies, choosing music, or by placing a flower on the casket.
It is also important for adults to be prepared for the funeral ceremony. There are a range of cultural and religious differences in response to death and it is essential that members of the school community who are attending the funeral are briefed beforehand on what will happen during the ceremony and burial. Funeral agencies may assist with further information and support.

There are also some practical needs to consider when large numbers of students are attending a funeral:

- to minimise fainting or hyperventilation encourage students to remove coats or jumpers prior to the ceremony
- have a first-aid trained person to assist distressed students
- have cold drinks and cool face washers available
- prepare for a media presence at the funeral
- get students and staff to return to school for coffee and sandwiches after the funeral to allow monitoring of reactions and support
- organise a time for students not attending the funeral to bring their memorials and floral tributes to a nominated room at school and for someone to take them to the funeral on their behalf.
## Attachment K- Business Continuity Planning Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Detail</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk Management</strong></td>
<td>Risk assessment - What could occur/likelihood</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Business Impact Analysis</strong></td>
<td>School/Business process impact analysis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Staff, data, ICT network, buildings</td>
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<td><strong>Security Management</strong></td>
<td>- Security arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Facility security</td>
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<td>- Staff protection</td>
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<td>- Communication and Alerts</td>
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<td><strong>Emergency Response</strong></td>
<td>Emergency Management Structure</td>
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<td>(first five minutes)</td>
<td>a. Emergency Control Organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Roles and Responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Warden Duties</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kew - Emergency Procedure</strong></td>
<td>EWIS system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Radio Procedures</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emergency Call Response</td>
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<td>Emergency Action Contact List</td>
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<td><strong>Whole school</strong></td>
<td>Medical Alert lists</td>
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<td>First Aid Arrangements</td>
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<td><strong>Recovery Plan</strong></td>
<td>Evacuation Procedures</td>
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<td>(after event passed)</td>
<td>Lockdown Procedures</td>
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<td>Bomb Threat Checklist</td>
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<td>Internal emergency phone numbers</td>
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<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Students</td>
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<td>Media/General public</td>
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<td><strong>Counselling &amp; Support</strong></td>
<td>Grief counselling</td>
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<td>EAP</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rehearse and Review</strong></td>
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