



## The 'Skills for Life Adjustment and Resilience' (SOLAR) Program

### **What is SOLAR?**

It is an internationally developed, brief (five sessions) and scalable psychosocial intervention that targets distress and poor adjustment following disaster and trauma.

The intervention is a skills-based program that aims to intervene early to promote recovery after disaster and prevent long-term psychological conditions from developing.

### **Why is it needed?**

In the aftermath of disaster, a large proportion of people will develop psychosocial difficulties that impair recovery, but for which presentations do not meet threshold criteria for disorder. Although these adjustment problems can cause high distress and impairment, and often have signs of developing into a mental health disorder, few evidence-based interventions are available to facilitate recovery.

Clients receiving SOLAR will develop skills to manage stress and trauma.

Since coaches are not expected to have specialist expertise in mental health, the program's potential reach is increased, and it is expected to help prevent overwhelming an already burdened mental healthcare system in the aftermath of disaster.

### **Who is it for?**

SOLAR is for anyone who has been psychologically affected by a disaster - including community members and emergency responders. SOLAR coaches work with:

- Adults over 18 years
- People who do not have a diagnosed psychiatric disorder and/or are not seeking or requiring treatment for a diagnosed psychiatric disorder.

### **Who delivers it?**

SOLAR can be delivered by *both* mental health specialists and non-specialists in disaster-affected areas. Becoming a SOLAR coach involves:

- Professional development and training at no cost by an expert trauma-focussed organisation
- 12 months of ongoing support and supervision from post-disaster mental health specialists
- Developing skills in responding to emerging mental health concerns and supporting the recovery of community members

The role of coaches is to teach recovery skills, maintain motivation, encourage practice, reinforce effort, and problem-solve barriers to participation in the program, or practicing what the program teaches.

### **How was it developed?**

SOLAR was developed by international leaders in disaster mental health via an extremely rigorous process which is described on the third page of the article

### **Has it been evaluated?**

Yes. The article '[An Open Label Pilot Study of a Brief Psychosocial Intervention for Disaster and Trauma Survivors](#)' provides details of the randomised controlled trial design to measure pilot impacts, with mental health and functioning as main outcomes.

### **Is it beneficial?**

[The evaluation](#) concludes that SOLAR is safe to deliver in post-disaster settings and is associated with reductions in distress over time. Findings from the pilot also demonstrated that the SOLAR program was safe and feasible for non-mental health frontline workers (coaches) to deliver locally after two days of training.

### **Pilot status**

With funds from the State Trustees Australia Foundation, in 2020 Phoenix Australia– Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, trained a small number of local community members (n = 12) to deliver the Skills for Life Adjustment Resilience (SOLAR) program, and evaluated the benefits for participants in disaster affected rural communities of Victoria.

A partnership has been formed with the Mental Health Practitioners Network (MHPN), to identify and support supervision of SOLAR coaches in relevant communities. The pilot evaluation has informed recommendations for a large-scale roll-out of SOLAR in disaster-affected Victorian communities.

Phoenix currently have several trials underway to pilot the intervention in different modalities (online web-based, app-based) and for different populations (aged care, FRNSW, kids and teens, and AV personnel). Phoenix are also currently working on a feasibility pilot using SOLAR for female veterans and former emergency services personnel.