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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Emotional Resilience the Key to Surviving Storm Season

A torch, battery-operated radio, fresh water and tinned food are not the only items parents need to have on stand-by in the lead-up to storm season.

The emotional resilience to cope with life's ups and downs is even more important to have in our personal emergency kit, according to Professor Matt Sanders from the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program.

Professor Sanders said how a parent responds to stressful life events such as a natural disaster has a powerful impact on children.

“Children look to the adults in their life for cues on how to respond to difficult situations, so the better a parent can cope with challenges, the better role model they can be to their children,” he said

“The good news is resilience is a life skill that can be taught, and can be learnt.

“That’s why Triple P has been on the road for the past 12 months delivering free *Raising Resilient Children* seminars to parents still dealing with the impact of Tropical Cyclone Debbie.”

So far, almost 900 parents have attended seminars in the Mackay, Whitsunday and Isaac region and in parts of Logan and the Gold Coast to learn how to encourage their children to manage emotions, deal with stress, cope with disappointment, problem-solve and maintain a positive attitude in the face of challenging circumstances.

50 seminars will be delivered by late March next year, jointly funded under the Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

Professor Sanders said the psychological impact on a child from seeing their home and possessions under threat, damaged or destroyed, and their parents in distress, cannot be underestimated.

“It’s not uncommon for children in this situation to develop behaviour problems or for existing problems to worsen,” he said.

“This could be anything from disrupted eating and sleeping patterns including nightmares and bedwetting, through to feeling more anxious, hypervigilant, fearful and generally overwhelmed.”

Professor Sanders said prevention is always better than a cure when it comes to managing children’s behaviour.

“It’s much more effective for parents to get in early to prevent minor behavioural issues from becoming major problems,” he said.



Mackay parents Stephanie and Karl Black know all too well what it's like dealing with the aftermath of a natural disaster.

Their lives changed overnight on March 29 last year, the day after Severe Tropical Cyclone Debbie hit the Mackay region.

They lost almost everything they owned when 1.2 metres of cyclone-related floodwaters forced them out of their Draper's Siding home near Eton.

Furniture, fittings, appliances, clothes, their car; everything was gone.

They literally walked away from the life they had through floodwaters with their children on their shoulders, to the safety of a two-story house across the road.

Since then, they have moved four times, meaning children Cooper, 10, Alanhney, 7 and Amity, 5 have had to move schools and preschools, which has been a huge upheaval for the family.

Stephanie says the cost of setting up their home and life again from scratch has been enormous, both financially and emotionally.

"We were unfortunately under-insured, so our life has changed dramatically since Cyclone Debbie," she said.

Wanting to know how to cope with what her family was going through, Stephanie attended a Triple P *Raising Resilient Children* seminar in Mackay earlier this year.

"I needed to know how to parent in this situation," she said.

"I was in a rut, miserable and questioning why everything had happened to us and it was rubbing off on my children, especially my oldest son who started experiencing anxiety and thinking things were somehow his fault after the cyclone."

While Stephanie had to go back to work full-time after Cyclone Debbie to help support her family, she has since been made redundant.

She said the coping skills she learnt at the Triple P seminar also helped her through that transition.

"I was able to process the redundancy more positively, and I know that if I didn't have the skills I learnt about resilience I would probably once again be questioning why that had happened to me and feeling miserable," she said.



“It’s actually been a blessing in disguise for us, I’m home full-time with the children now and things are looking up – there’s a light at the end of the tunnel for all of us.

The Blacks have now been settled into a home for over a year now, have a new baby Jake, who is now seven months old, and the kids have found their feet at their new school.

“My son is doing better with managing his anxiety and we are getting the help for him that he needs,” Stephanie said.

“I know I wouldn’t be in this position mentally if I didn’t attend the resilience seminar.

“While Cyclone Debbie was life changing, learning these skills has also been life-changing in a positive way for our entire family.”

To check what *Raising Resilient Children* seminars are available in your area visit [www.triplep-parenting.net](http://www.triplep-parenting.net).

All Triple P programs are free in Queensland including Triple P Online and Teen Triple P Online.

**Media contact: Rachel Stewart, Media Relations Manager, 0408 130767**