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# Re-building a fire affected school using Social Media

Posted by Megan Iemma | Friday 3 May 2013, 04:43 PM (EST) Like Tweet

**After the devastating bushfires that swept through Tasmania in 2013, a teacher was inspired to help rebuild Dunalley Primary, which was destroyed. This is their story.**

It all started with some posts asking for help on the "Tassie Fires- We Can Help" page on Facebook. From this the "Teacher's Angels" group was formed. I became passionate about getting Dunalley Primary back on its feet.

## Why help?

I left Tasmania 14 years ago to study Music and Teaching at the University of Melbourne. In 2000, my own high school Reece High in Devonport, burnt down and all their musical instruments and resources were destroyed, so I had first-hand knowledge of what it was like to rebuild a school from the ground up.



*The library has had over 2,000 books donated*

Another factor that encouraged me to help the Dunalley bushfire victims was experiencing having a close family friend, who lives in Murdunna in Tasmania, lose everything when her house was damaged by a bushfire.

## Help from far and wide

Through the 'Tassie Fires – We Can Help' Facebook page, Fiona Lucas from Geelong-based [iRespect Online](#) contacted me to see if we could set up a separate event page on Facebook to raise money for specific items such as lunch boxes, school bags, and ICT equipment.

I was delegating a lot of ideas and tasks out to people and delved into all my contacts (not just in education) to help support the school. An email list was set up with the help of the school council president, Elizabeth Knox; State Council President for Parents/Friends, Jen Eddington; and Principal Matt Kenny.

My Twitter #PLN (personal learning network) has been invaluable in tweeting and helping out with resources. Normally, I share and source ideas with Twitter, but this was a different ball game.

## How to set up a school in less than 3 weeks

I have connected with individuals globally, with the sole purpose of getting Dunalley Primary ready to function again. A Google document was created that was a wish list of items and resources from the staff at Dunalley Primary - including ideas from the "Teacher's Angels" group.

It was a work in progress and all of the team members could see who was following what items and when it was signed off. It stopped us from crossing over, with so many items coming in. This list has now been handed over to the Tasmanian Department of Education, under the guidance of Judy Travers.

## Spirit of the Community

There's an old Australian joke that Tasmanians are said to have "two heads", however in this instance, it has been "two hearts". The library has had over 2,000 books donated and ready to be covered and prepared by a team of librarians, in the coming weeks.

Students in Year 6 requested a 'red tricycle', as they had bought one for the kindergarten students to use this year - this must have touched people's hearts as the school now has a small collection of red tricycles!

I have learned to "Ask, Seek and Knock" and if I didn't ask, I never would have known the power of our community.

### About this author

#### Megan Iemma

Megan Iemma is a consultant, trainer and writer that has worked in technology consulting and training in addition to being a fully qualified primary/secondary music teacher. She has worked in a variety of settings including schools, Teamboard Australia, Pearson and the State Library of Victoria as an Education Officer. Twitter: @megsamanda

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