A Darwin psychiatrist who flew to China to assist people in the wake of this year’s destructive earthquakes today presented the NT Government with his submission to the Australian Medical Journal on his experience overseas.

The submission was presented to Children and Families Minister Malarndirri McCarthy on World Mental Health Day.

Associate Professor Rob Parker, who works for the NT Government’s Mental Health Services, was part of an Australian team of disaster mental health experts to provide mental health training to more than 240 health professionals in Sichuan.

“Dr Parker’s passion and drive is admirable - as was his ability to assist those in their hour of need … ‘to help the Chinese people remove the shadows from their hearts’,“ Ms McCarthy said.

The Northern Territory Government provided $100,000 in funding to help aid and recovery efforts following the May earthquake, which left about 64,000 people dead and 4.6 million homeless.

Ms McCarthy said the three-day training program was the first disaster mental health training conducted by an overseas agency to be officially recognised by the Chinese government.

“I think it is an amazing testament to the broad talent and experience we have here in the Northern Territory,” Ms McCarthy said.

The Medical Journal of Australia is the nation’s leading peer-reviewed medical journal.

The submission, titled The China-Australia Training on Psychological Crisis Intervention for Medical Aid Leaders and Volunteers, is expected to be accepted into the MJA for the December edition.

Associate Professor Parker said the training team also visited Pengzhou reconstruction village to review the reconstruction effort and talk to people affected by the earthquake, as well as provide lectures on the effect of disasters on the mental health of children.

“To be able to help these people in their hour of need was something I had wanted to do, and I was particularly inspired by Professor Beverley Raphael, a world expert in disaster mental health response who invited me to assist with the training.”

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