



As at 23 January 2020

Mental Health Assistance for Australians Affected by Bushfires

The Australian Government is investing \$76 million in a dedicated mental health support package for individuals, families and communities, including emergency services personnel, affected by the bushfires.

Accessing support

If you live in or have visited a bushfire-affected region, you can access up to 10 immediate, free counselling sessions through mental health services commissioned by local Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

If you have been affected by the bushfires, you are eligible to receive Medicare rebates for up to 10 psychological therapy sessions through eligible GPs, psychologists, occupational therapists and social workers. These sessions can be accessed face to face or via telehealth. You do not need a GP referral, diagnosed mental illness or mental health treatment plan to access these sessions.

To help find the care that best meets your needs, please speak to your local PHN. PHNs in fire affected areas have received funding for bushfire coordinators to assist you find services in your area. You can contact your Primary Health Network through the map locator tool at www.health.gov.au/phn.

These new services supplement existing services already being provided on the ground.

Existing on-the-ground support

You can access mental health support by contacting:

- ▶ Your GP or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- ▶ Your local recovery and evacuation centre
- ▶ Your local headspace centre (for young people 12 to 25 years)
- ▶ Services Australia Mobile Service Centre

Phone support

You can access telephone support by contacting:

- ▶ Services Australia Disaster Hotline – 180 22 66
- ▶ Lifeline – 13 11 14
- ▶ Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636
- ▶ Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800 (for young people 5 to 25 years)



Online support

- ▶ www.headtohealth.gov.au
- ▶ www.headspace.org.au
- ▶ www.emergingminds.com.au
- ▶ www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/bushfire-support

The Australian Government recognises that supporting communities is important in recovery.

- ▶ Local PHNs in bushfire-affected regions will be providing grants of up to \$10,000 to strengthen social connectedness and peer support activities. Please contact your PHN if you would like to discuss a bushfire recovery event.
- ▶ Training will be rolled out over the next six months for front line and emergency services personnel in trauma informed care and psychological first aid, this includes doctors, pharmacists, health professionals and organisations managing frontline emergency staff, including firefighters.

More information on the mental health services that the Australian, State and Territory Governments are making available to support bushfire recovery is available at: www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/information-for-australians-who-have-been-affected-by-bushfires

Key Assistance

- ▶ **\$ 76 million for Mental Health Measure for Australians affected by the bushfires**
- ▶ **Free distress and trauma counselling**
- ▶ **Medicare rebates for 10 psychological visits**
- ▶ **Medicare rebates for video telehealth services**
- ▶ **Training and support for emergency personnel**
- ▶ **Coordination of mental health services**