

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Equality  
Minister for Creative Industries



Wednesday, 8 July 2020

## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR BUSHFIRE COMMUNITIES

People struggling with mental health after the state's devastating bushfires will get the help they need from services and programs in their own communities, with a funding boost from the Victorian Government.

Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley today announced all the services set to receive their share of the Victorian Government's \$23.4 million recovery fund, acknowledging the need for all Victorians to stand beside our courageous rural communities as they rebuild their lives.

The package includes \$8.75 million to bolster mental health services provided by Albury Wodonga Health and Latrobe Regional Health who offer specialist early intervention advice to GPs and community clinicians.

Funding will also go to Austin Health's Victorian Trauma Treatment Service for post-disaster treatment and advisory services, and to Phoenix Australia who provide training and mentorship to community leaders and mental health providers.

The investment also includes \$6.6 million for practical mental health support programs delivered by organisations such as Gippsland Lakes Community Health Consortium, Alpine Health in partnership with NESAY, Corryong Health Service, Tallangatta Health Service and Beyond Blue. The initiatives include:

- training local groups such as football clubs to recognise when teammates are developing mental illness
- providing advice and training to parents to support children through long-term recovery
- peer outreach programs for farmers, foresters and small business owners
- health and wellbeing meet-ups such as exercise groups, social events, and youth camps

Another \$3 million is dedicated to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to establish social and emotional wellbeing programs, in line with the recommendation from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

This funding is on top of \$51.2 million for the Mental Health Practitioners in Schools initiative rolling out to ten schools across East Gippsland and the \$14.4 million to establish the Victorian Bushfires Case Support in January, which is accessible by calling 1800 560 760.

The Victorian Government has now committed \$307.4 million to bushfire response and recovery.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley

*"We haven't for a moment forgotten how tough it's been for Victorians in bushfire-affected communities. Mental health support, especially for those in the regional areas is a top priority."*

*"This disaster has had a profound impact on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities – we want everyone to know there is support here for them if they need it."*

*"While the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System is underway and recommending lifesaving reforms, we're making sure Victorians can get the help they need, when they need it."*

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