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**THE HON KRISTY MCBAIN**

**MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND  
TERRITORIES**

**MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**



**INGRID STITT**

**SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE  
MINISTER FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH**

**MINISTER FOR AGEING**

**MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIFAITH VICTORIA**

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

Saturday, 2 May 2026

## **MENTAL HEALTH BOOST FOR BUSHFIRE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**

The Albanese and Allan Labor Governments are delivering more mental health care for bushfire-affected communities.

Impacted communities will soon be able to access more care, closer to home and in ways that work for them.

Three existing Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals will expand the reach of their services into bushfire-affected communities.

These Locals are now securing locations in bushfire-affected communities so that in-person support is delivered where it is needed most.

Locals provide support and treatment for adults experiencing mental illness or psychological distress.

You don't need a Medicare card or GP referral to access care at a Local, and services are completely free.

Mental health support workers and clinicians, including psychologists will soon be deployed on the ground in affected local government areas.

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The expanded Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals are:

- Greater Geelong Queenscliffe - expanding services to the Colac Otway Shire
- Benalla, Wangaratta, Mansfield - expanding services to the Towong Shire
- Shepparton (servicing Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie and Moira) - expanding services to the Mitchell and Murrindindi Shires.

Communities can access support now by calling the statewide Locals intake service, Partners in Wellbeing, on 1300 375 330. Support will be expanded to face-to-face appointments or by visiting staff in the community.

Services will operate Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, with face-to-face appointments available at least three days per week.

This \$4.9 million investment is funded under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements and is part of the more than \$370 million support package announced by the Albanese and Allan Labor Governments in January.

The expanded services will operate until 30 June 2027.

### **Quotes attributable to Federal Minister for Emergency Management Kristy McBain**

“I visited impacted communities in Victoria earlier this year and saw first-hand the devastation for communities.”

“The mental health impacts from these sorts of events don’t go away overnight and I’m pleased to see mental health services being delivered where they are needed most.”

“The Albanese Government will continue working very closely with the Allan Government to make sure Victorians affected by the fires continue to receive support to get back on their feet.”

### **Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt**

“We’re providing more, easy to access mental health care in these communities.”

“Whether it’s in person or over the phone – dedicated mental health staff will be embedded into these communities and supporting residents to recover.”

### **Quote attributable to Victorian Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery Vicki Ward**

“Experience has taught us bushfires can affect people’s mental health long after they’re over, which is why we’re committed to supporting these communities.”

### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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