



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIANS AFFECTED BY THE 2019-20 BUSHFIRES

Summary of information for EMDR Therapy Clients

EMDR Therapy is recognised by Medicare as part of the Bushfire Recovery Program

This is edited from the full document available at :

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/mental-health-support-for-australians-affected-by-the-2019-20-bushfires>

Bushfire Recovery Access Program

The Bushfire Recovery Access Program provides on the ground mental health support for those directly affected by bushfires in three ways:

Free counselling

Free distress and trauma counselling sessions are available for individuals and families and emergency services personnel affected by bushfires.

Up to 10 free sessions are available through mental health services commissioned in bushfire affected regions by Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

Medicare Bushfire Recovery Initiative

Bushfire affected individuals and families, and emergency response personnel will be eligible to receive Medicare rebates for up to 10 psychological therapy sessions through GPs, psychologists and other mental health professionals.

Medicare Bushfire Recovery Telehealth initiative

Individuals, families and emergency response personnel who cannot easily access mental health professionals in person, will be able to obtain counselling and support through video telehealth services, with Medicare rebates.

Who is eligible for the free frontline emergency distress and trauma counselling?

Anyone affected by the fires is able to access these services. You do not need to have suffered a financial loss as a result of the fires to access these services. People living in residential aged care facilities are also able to access these services.

How do the new Medicare Bushfire Recovery Medicare funded face-to-face sessions differ from current arrangements under Better Access?

Currently people need to have a GP mental health treatment plan and a diagnosed mental health condition to access the existing Better Access initiative. However, the Government has removed these restrictions for the new Medicare Bushfire Recovery items. **To access the new Medicare rebated items you do not need to have a diagnosed mental health condition, GP referral or mental health treatment plan.** This aims to ensure people can quickly access these services.

Under this measure, people affected by bushfires are able to self-refer to an eligible allied mental health provider. The new items are available to all people living in the community and there is no age restriction. People living in residential aged care facilities are also able to access these services.

Individuals who currently access services under the Better Access initiative and were directly affected by the bushfires, will be able to access the additional 10 sessions under the Bushfire Recovery items.

What is the Medicare Bushfire Recovery Telehealth initiative?

People affected by the bushfires, who do not have access to face-to-face Medicare Bushfire Recovery Sessions, are able to claim rebates for video consultations. **You do not need to have a diagnosed mental health condition, GP referral or mental health treatment plan.** Services can be delivered by allied mental health professionals who are eligible to provide Medicare services under the Better Access initiative, that is:

- psychologists
- occupational therapists
- social workers.

GPs can also provide mental health and wellbeing support services through telehealth. These GP services will provide essential support, overcome workforce shortages in areas affected by bushfires, and improve provider choice for individuals, families and first responders.

How much will Medicare Bushfire Recovery face-to-face and telehealth sessions cost?

Consultation fees charged by health professionals are determined by the provider or practice. Only a portion of costs are covered by Medicare unless the health professional bulk bills. **The Government encourages all health professions to bulk bill Australians affected by the fires.** When deciding on a provider, you may wish to contact them for a full list of fees for services.

How long will the Medicare Bushfire Recovery services be available?

The services are available **until 31 December 2021.** People can access the immediate counselling and GP bushfire telehealth items now. People can access the full package of services from 17 January 2020.