



## Mental Health Victoria welcomes Victorian Government's support for post-bushfire mental health

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Mental Health Victoria welcomes the State Government's announcement of \$23.4 million for increased support for people struggling with their mental health and wellbeing after the devastating 2019-2020 bushfire season.

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said the bushfires have had a profound impact on the mental health of individuals and communities in Victoria.

"The hardest hit are of course people who have lost loved ones or had their own lives at risk, but the trauma can extend also to those who lose a home and property, their income, job opportunities, local services, social networks, community and country," he said.

"Our first responders, the fire fighters and other emergency personnel who were on active duty for extended periods of time, also need to be able to access all the support they need, and we also know that new bushfire events can retrigger mental health issues for people who experienced loss and distress in previous disasters, including of course the horrendous 2009 Black Saturday bushfires."

The State Government package includes funding to expand mental health services and provide specialist early intervention mental health advice to GPs and community health clinicians. It also allocates funds for practical mental health support programs for local groups, families, farmers, foresters and small business owners, and for Aboriginal community controlled health organisations.

"These are well targeted programs that will fill gaps in support in many communities and act as both prevention and early intervention, aiming to make sure Victorians get they need when they need it – and not just when an issue escalates into a crisis," Mr Clelland said.

"We are pleased the Victorian Government has acted now to provide this critical support and look forward to further such investments once the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System hands down its final report later this year."

*For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call 0422 451 389.*