

MEDIA RELEASE

Support after the 2009 bushfires

14 January 2019



An Australian Government Initiative

People living in Mitchell, Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Whittlesea and Nillumbik regions can access additional support services in the lead up to and following the 10th anniversary of the February 2009 bushfires.

The anniversaries of traumatic events and experiences can prompt a range of physical, mental, emotional and behavioural reactions, including nervousness, fear, worry or moodiness. While symptoms such as these are normal and are part of the body's natural healing and recovery process, some people may need to access online services or health professionals for coping strategies.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is funding Murray PHN (Primary Health Network) to lead the Bushfires of 2009 Community Support Project, which is providing a range of services to local communities.

Information kits are currently being distributed, which include posters that detail how to access online and face-to-face support, and flyers that provide answers to frequently asked questions.

Support for community members will also be accessible from a range of venues, including community markets and commemorative events during January and February.

In addition, community groups and organisations can register their interest in completing Mental Health First Aid training, which teaches people the skills to help someone who they're concerned about.

The project is underpinned by member organisations of the 2009 Bushfire Community Support Committee – DHHS, Murray PHN, Alexandra District Health, Nexus Primary Health, the Australian Primary Mental Health Alliance, Eastern Melbourne PHN, Murrindindi Shire Council, Mitchell Shire Council, Lower Hume Primary Care Partnership and Goulburn Valley Health.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said, "We know that some people won't get help for their mental health due to fear of judgment, however 10 years is not a long time when you are talking about traumatic experiences.

"What many people don't know though, is that one in five people will experience a mental illness in their lifetime. In our region that equates to almost 130,000 people who experience mental ill-health."

Australian Primary Mental Health Alliance CEO Renee Hayden said that during this time, people may experience emotional and physical reactions. It is important to recognise how you are feeling and speak to someone if things don't seem right.

"Trauma is not just something that happens immediately after an event. It can build up over time or it can come and go, especially during commemorative and anniversary times."

"We know that health professionals are not exempt from experiencing mental ill-health either, so this project ensures that they are also offered support over the next few months."

To find out more and for project updates visit murrayphn.org.au/bushfiresupport
If you or someone you know needs help immediately, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 for 24/7 crisis support.

Contact details

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