

MEDIA RELEASE

Support beyond the bushfires

21 March 2019



An Australian Government Initiative

While anniversary events for the bushfires of 2009 are now complete, community members are still being encouraged to seek support. Should you or someone you know require counselling through this time, contact the Australian Primary Mental Health Alliance on 1300 514 811 to be connected with local services.

The Bushfires of 2009 Community Support Project is led by a committee focused on supporting people living in Mitchell, Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Whittlesea and Nillumbik regions.

The committee is made up of local, state and federally funded organisations, working together to distribute information kits and provide mental health and wellbeing support.

Committee members attended over 30 commemorative events and organised for Mental Health First Aid training to be delivered in four locations. The two-day training teaches people the skills to identify and help someone who may be struggling.

In addition, the committee developed a local website containing further information and resources: beyondthebushfires.com.au

Australian Primary Mental Health Alliance CEO Renee Hayden said, that the experience of trauma can typically last days, weeks or even years. Re-trauma is also not unusual, and people will often require a little additional support during times of anniversaries and commemorative events.

“It’s normal to feel fear, sadness, anger and grief after a traumatic experience,” she said. Feelings begin to fade as we recover but fear and anguish can also stay with us a long time.

“When these feelings interfere with a person’s ability to work, perform activities or relate to the people close to them, it’s a good idea to seek support through a doctor or mental health professional.”

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said strong connections were important for our mental health. “If you know someone who was affected by the 2009 bushfires, it’s a good idea to check in on them to see if they are ok. People find it helpful to know that family and friends are thinking of them,” he said. “Providing an opportunity for someone to talk can benefit them enormously.

“The headtohealth.gov.au/ website is also a good online mental health resource for people to use.”

The Bushfires of 2009 Community Support Project is led by Murray PHN and funded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The committee is composed of representatives of Murray PHN, the Department of Health and Human Services, 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.

For more information about this project visit murrayphn.org.au/bushfiresupport

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