



FACT SHEET

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

NATIONAL HEALTH PLAN

Supporting the mental health of Australians through the Coronavirus pandemic

The Government is providing a package of measures to support the mental health and wellbeing of Australians as we face the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Government is doing everything it can to help Australians navigate and then recover from this unprecedented event. We urge all Australians – keep calm and keep informed.

While we might need to be physically distant from one another to help slow the spread of Coronavirus, we can stay socially connected.

The Government recognises additional investment and support is likely to be required as the pandemic develops in Australia and we will continue to work closely with the mental health sector to monitor and respond to emerging needs.

Why is this important?

Coronavirus is changing the way we live, work and communicate. The Coronavirus pandemic and associated response measures, such as restrictions on social gatherings, will have significant impacts for Australians and may cause people stress, anxiety and concern.

Prioritising our mental wellbeing is an important part of staying healthy. The Government's Head to Health website (www.headtohealth.gov.au) is the best place to start if you feel like you might need some help coping with anxiety and worry about Coronavirus.

What are the measures in this package?

The Government is providing the following extra mental health support to Australians at this time:

- Dedicated Coronavirus digital resources and a 24x7 phone counselling service led by Beyond Blue and staffed by accredited mental health professionals to help people experiencing stress or anxiety associated with the impacts of the pandemic, such as health concerns, employment changes, business closures or family pressures. Beyond Blue will establish this service, supported by a \$5m donation from Medibank, an ongoing Beyond Blue partner.



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- Funding to bolster critical phone and online support services, including Lifeline and Kids Helpline, ensuring they can meet anticipated increased demand and providing job opportunities for Australians to be trained as counsellors. Extra funding will bolster other existing services including digital peer-support to people with urgent, severe and complex mental illness who may be experiencing additional distress.
- A dedicated mental health and wellbeing program for frontline health workers will provide online and phone services, giving frontline workers support when and where they need it.
- The Community Visitors Scheme will be expanded, with funding for extra staff and volunteers to ensure older people receiving aged care support, stay connected on line and by phone even though they may be physically separated from others.
- headspace will expand its digital work and study service, to help younger Australians stay on track in their education and training and prepare them for the workforce.
- For First Australians, new culturally appropriate mental health and wellbeing resources will be developed by Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) across a range of platforms.
- Increased funding for Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA) to bolster its free helpline (1300 726 306) and produce new toolkits and resources to support expecting and new parents cope with increased stress and anxiety.
- Funding to continue to deliver psychosocial support to Commonwealth community mental health clients for a further 12 months. This will allow additional time for people with severe and complex mental illness to complete their applications and testing for support under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
- A targeted mental health communications campaign as part of the broader Coronavirus communications campaign. This will include wide-ranging advertising, social media engagement, education and awareness initiatives to keep the conversation going about mental health as the full impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic emerge.
- Continued expansion of the resources provided on the Government's digital mental health gateway Head to Health (www.headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support), giving people access to trusted mental health information and services.
- Extra investment in the Australian Psychological Society's Find a Psychologist website, to ensure people can connect with a psychologist if they need one, no matter where they are around Australia.

These measures complement the expansion of telehealth services to ensure that people can continue to access their mental health treatment services by videoconferencing or telephone.

Who benefits?



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Expanding mental health services across Australia will not only ensure help is there when people need it, but will provide new job opportunities for people (for example, to be trained as Lifeline counsellors) to be there to support to their fellow Australians.

This package provides careful, targeted and practical measures to support mental health and wellbeing for Australians during this crisis, giving people direct access to online support and counselling services when and where they need it most.

How much will this cost?

The measures will cost \$74 million over 2019-20 and 2020-21.