



Prioritising Mental Health – COVID-19 pandemic response – Victorian support

The Australian Government recognises that ongoing restrictions are having a significant effect on the wellbeing and mental health of people and communities in Victoria, and is ensuring that support is available. Since March, the Australian Government has invested \$43.9 million in extra assistance to Victoria. This includes:

- \$17 million to enhance the capacity of key services, comprising:
 - \$12 million for headspace, Beyond Blue, Lifeline and Kids Helpline
 - \$5 million for extra digital and phone services for vulnerable groups.
- \$26.9 million for 15 new enhanced mental health centres.
- An additional 10 Medicare subsidised psychological therapy sessions for those subject to further restrictions were made available from 7 August 2020.

Why is this important?

The second outbreak of the pandemic in Victoria is having a significant effect on the mental health and wellbeing of many Victorians, with data indicating that there has been an increase in people presenting to hospitals and in the use of mental health services.

Funding for key services ensures they are better able to meet demand, provide immediate phone and online advice, and link people to further support. In addition, mental health centres in familiar local settings allow people to rapidly and conveniently access care without having to present at emergency departments. They also support GPs and health professionals by providing a local referral point for dedicated mental health treatment linked to more intensive and ongoing care.

Who will benefit?

Victorians affected by the second wave of the pandemic will be better able to get the mental health support they need, when they need it, including through 24/7 phone and online services, and from more mental health professionals working in the community.

How much will this cost?

This will cost \$43.9 million over two years from 2020–21.