



## Prioritising Mental Health – Doubling Better Access Initiative sessions

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Australians experiencing mental health issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic through an expanded Better Access Pandemic Support measure. This measure will provide \$100.8 million for up to 10 additional Medicare-subsidised psychological therapy sessions each year for patients with an existing Mental Health Treatment Plan.

This measure supports the Government's efforts to improve mental health outcomes for Australians and reduce the number of lives lost to suicide, by providing greater access to medical professionals and primary care services such as mental health support.

### Why is this important?

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant effect on the mental health of many Australians, especially those with pre-existing mental health conditions. It has led to increased psychological distress and greater demand for services.

This measure is critical for people who require more intensive support to get through, and recover from, the pandemic. It will help reduce severe or prolonged mental health conditions by enhancing access to recovery treatments.

This measure is informed by, and supports, the Government's Coronavirus National Health Plan and the National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, to ensure Australians have the mental health support they need throughout this pandemic and that we remain prepared across the country.

Doubling Better Access sessions was also a recommendation in the Productivity Commission Draft Report into mental health.

### Who will benefit?

Individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, families and communities across Australia directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, health professionals including general practitioners, allied health workers, psychologists and Primary Health Networks will benefit from this funding.

### How much will this cost?

This will cost \$100.8 million from 2020–21 to 2021–22.