



The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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Additional COVID-19 Mental Health Support

The Australian Government will provide 10 additional Medicare subsidised psychological therapy sessions for people subjected to further restrictions in areas impacted by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health and suicide prevention remains one of our Government's highest priorities, and this Government recognises the mental health impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on individuals and communities, particularly those in areas such as Victoria, where regrettable but necessary measures are needed to stop the spread of the virus.

The additional Medicare subsidised sessions will allow people in eligible areas who have used their 10 sessions to continue to receive mental health care from their psychologist, psychiatrist, GP or other eligible allied health worker.

The new items will apply to people subject to public health orders restricting their movement within the state or territory issued at any time from 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021, and to people who are required to isolate or quarantine under public health orders.

Patients will be required to have a Mental Health Treatment Plan and a review with their GP to access the additional sessions. This measure will commence on Friday 7 August and be available until 31 March 2021.

Our Government has responded early and rapidly to address the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures needed to contain it, announcing more than \$500 million additional funding for mental health and suicide prevention since January, including Medicare subsidies for telehealth consultations.

The \$7.3 million in additional support recognises that many people in areas impacted by the second wave of the pandemic will be facing increased emotional and mental stress.

This will ensure that Australians can continue to access essential mental health treatment and support at this difficult time.

The Australian Government continues to demonstrate its firm commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians, with estimated expenditure for mental health services and suicide prevention to be more than \$5.2 billion in 2019-20.

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