



Dear CEO / Primary Health Manager

The Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program has been developed through a \$3.5 million gift from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund. It aims to assist people directly affected by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires to access psychological counselling support.

The program provides six counselling sessions to each individual (including dependant children over five years of age) who has been directly affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. Applicants will be sent six vouchers that can be used to see an eligible counsellor of their own choice and in their own time.

There is no cash involved in this process and applicants will not have to pay any co-payment to the counsellor.

This is a statewide program and it is anticipated that people beyond fire-affected areas will apply for counselling under this program.

Counsellors eligible to provide counselling treatment under this program are:

- psychological counsellors employed in community health services receiving funds from the Department of Human Services
- psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists registered as approved Medicare Providers under the Commonwealth Government's Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative.

Private providers who are not approved as Medicare providers under the Commonwealth Government's Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative are **not** eligible for this program and will not receive financial reimbursement.

Many community health services will already be providing counselling to clients eligible under the Bushfire Psychological Counselling Voucher Program. Funding for services under this program is not retrospective and if a client chooses not to apply for a voucher this should not impact on their access to continued care.

Each psychological counselling voucher is valued at \$100 and is redeemable for a one hour psychological counselling session. Sessions provided under this program are exempt from fees.

Agencies are reminded that as this program is a fee for service arrangement, client contacts under this program must **not be** reported against any other state-funded or Commonwealth-funded program.

The program will commence on 10 August 2009 and will run until 10 August 2011. Participants who register with the program will be directed to a range of websites, including yours, to find an eligible counsellor.

I have attached some further information about the program. Information for service providers will also be available online at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal> or through our hotline on 1800 180 213.

Thank you for supporting the psychological recovery of people affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

Yours sincerely
Pam White

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For more information call 1800 180 213
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/bushfireappeal