

Media Release & Invitation

Monday 13 July 2020

For release: Tuesday 14 July 2020

Bushfire Recovery Counselling Support

Today, CatholicCare Wollongong is proud to announce the commencement of the Bushfire Recovery Counselling Support Program and the appointment of a local Recovery Counsellor, to assist people who have been impacted by recent bush fires.

The appointment comes at a critical time for people who are recovering from the bushfires. "Research informs us that six months after a natural disaster, there is an increased risk of serious mental health challenges, including a heightened risk of suicide", said Director Michael Austin. "These people may be experiencing a wide range of feelings, from anger, anxiety and depression to guilt and grief", he said.

When a natural disaster occurs, there is often a delay in help seeking as people are often trying to re-establish their property and practical components of their everyday life. These people may see others moving forward, yet they may continue to experience feelings of grief and distress, which can become invasive and unmanageable. This is often the point where people should reach out and seek support.

With the assistance of Federal Government grant funding, CatholicCare can provide tailored services to meet the needs of any individuals who are recovering from the bush fires.

"This program aims to take a prevention/early intervention approach to supporting the wellbeing of vulnerable people in our community", said MP Fiona Phillips.

"Our community has been through so much this year, with drought, bushfires, flood and now COVID-19, and I know that so many people are still struggling to deal with what has happened. We need local mental health services now more than ever and I am pleased to see programs like this being delivered", she said.

The opportunity to sit down, speak to someone, reflect on what has happened, recognise that the healing process takes time and to be reassured that there are people and services available to lend a hand is vital. If you or someone you know is experiencing ongoing issues, please contact us by phoning 1800 068 698. We can assist with booking telephone or video sessions or face to face counselling services in Milton, Sanctuary Point, Nowra or Conjola.

MEDIA INVITATION:

Date: Tomorrow, Tuesday 14 July 2020

Time: 10am

Location: 3/69 Junction St, Nowra

Attendees: MP Fiona Phillips, CatholicCare Director Michael Austin, CatholicCare Executive Manager Rosanne Plunkett, Bushfire Recovery Counsellor Janie Roberts.

Media Contact: Pippa Spence 0408 27 27 59

For Comment: MP Fiona Phillips (02) 4423 1782 and CatholicCare Director, Michael Austin 0417 697 245 (Available for pre-recorded interviews today).