



Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians

Minister for Youth and Sport

23 January 2020

Supporting young people affected by fires

The Morrison Government is ensuring the needs of young Australians affected by the tragic bushfires are recognised and supported.

Minister for Youth, Richard Colbeck, has visited the bushfires zones on the New South Wales South Coast, to hear directly from those on the ground about the additional support they need and what young people are experiencing.

“Having talked to you people across the country since becoming the Minister for Youth, I hear regularly about the challenges our young Australian are facing” Minister Colbeck said.

“Challenges such as mental health and access to employment, education and transport have been regularly raised with me and the Youth Taskforce.

“For young people living through the impacts of the bushfires, and who are now facing additional hardship, the Coalition Government is working hard to provide additional assistance and support.

“Supporting the long term mental health of young people living in the hardest hit bushfire affected regions will become a key focus as communities begin the process of recovery.”

The Morrison Government last week announced they will provide \$8 million to extend Beyond Blue’s “Be You” mental health in education program for schools and early learning services across bushfire zones

“We know that the Mental Health of Young people who have lived through these tragic bushfires, will be something that is very vulnerable over the immediate and ongoing future,” Minister Colbeck said.

“Yesterday I heard direct from service providers on the ground in bushfire zones who are already seeing the mental and emotional complications associated with having lived through the experience.”

Stakeholders at mental health support service, headspace, at Bega, underlined the pressures on staff, the wider issue of clinician numbers and how “compassion fatigue” was already taking a toll on local professionals.

But it was the long term support that remains the most daunting challenge as young people head back to school.

“We want to ensure young people have access to the support and services they need to ensure they can find a clear way ahead.”

The Morrison Government is also providing additional funding to Primary Health Networks to support headspace services in bushfire affected regions.

Minister Colbeck said Coalition Government was proud to be able to provide additional and expanded mental health support services in the bushfires zones.

“Up to \$300,000 will be provided to headspaces located in Bairnsdale, Albury-Wodonga, Gosford, Penrith, Bega, Nowra, Queanbeyan, Lithgow, Victor Harbor and Mount Barker.”

The Government is also providing \$4.4 million to fast-track the establishment of a new headspace service in Batemans Bay and upgrade the service to a full centre. It is expected to open in late 2020.

“This funding will allow headspace services in affected regions to ensure young people can get support when they need it,” Minister Colbeck said.

“I will continue to talk to Young people and listen to the challenges they are facing, and the Coalition Government will always continue to provide support to young people to ensure they have every opportunity.

ENDS