

7 April 2020

Free Counselling Support for Bushfire-Affected East Gippsland Communities

Free and confidential counselling support is now available for individuals, families and emergency service workers affected by the recent bushfires in East Gippsland.

This service is being delivered by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) and the Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria, with funding from Gippsland Primary Health Network (GPHN), which is leading the mental health response to bushfire affected areas of Gippsland.

Impacted community members can access up to 10 counselling sessions, free of charge and without a referral from a general practitioner, across Gippsland. While the service is usually delivered at a variety of locations across East Gippsland, currently due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, these services are currently being provided via telephone or video.

RAV Chief Executive Officer, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, said the organisation welcomed the opportunity to partner with the Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria, to support those impacted by the East Gippsland fires.

“Together, we’re able to assist people across the broad geographical areas of East Gippsland, and we know that this support is much-needed by individuals, couples, families and communities.”

Jo Huggins, Senior Manager Gippsland, highlighted that RAV had been working with East Gippsland communities for over 30 years and was very aware that the impacts of the fires over summer were still being felt.

“It’s been a difficult six months for communities across the region, not only as a result of the bushfires, but also because of the impact of coronavirus. These communities are continuing to show incredible strength, yet are still grieving the loss of life, homes and lifestyle.”

“Parents and carers are worried about the ongoing impact of the fires on their children, and many family relationships have become strained due to the additional stress family members are experiencing as a result of the fires. These reactions are normal responses to trauma.

“Having supported East Gippsland through a range of services in recent decades, RAV knows how important it is to be available to provide accessible services, and we encourage people impacted by the fires to reach out for free and confidential support.”

To find out how the service can assist you, or to make an appointment, call 1800 001 068 or email bushfiresupport@rav.org.au or visit www.rav.org.au/BushfireSupport for more information.

END OF RELEASE

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