

February 18, 2020

## Free mental health coaching now available in Gippsland

Gippsland communities, including those affected by bushfire, will be the first in Victoria to benefit from Beyond Blue's NewAccess mental health coaching – a free service delivering practical advice about how to manage the pressures and stresses of life.

Designed by Beyond Blue and delivered in conjunction with Wellways and Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN), NewAccess is a six-session program that focuses on early intervention for mental health conditions.

The program is free, completely confidential and available in-person or over the phone. It does not require a referral from a doctor.

NewAccess has been rolled out in parts of Queensland, New South Wales and the ACT since 2013, providing support to more than 10,000 people managing symptoms of mild to moderate anxiety and depression.

Evidence shows that seven out of ten people who use the service recover.

NewAccess coaches are trained in low-intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, guiding participants through a tailored, personal program.

Given its accessibility without the need for a doctor's referral and new local workforce, the free NewAccess program is particularly suited to people in rural and regional areas where mental health support can be limited.

**Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman** said NewAccess provides a great starting point for people feeling stressed, anxious or overwhelmed about everyday life issues.

"For most people, early intervention can prevent the onset of mental health issues. NewAccess is designed to help people identify the source of pressure and stress in their lives and provides practical ways they can respond," Ms Harman said.

"The non-clinical approach of NewAccess helps break down the harmful stigma associated with mental health conditions that can prevent people from seeking support. NewAccess coaches look forward to working with communities in Gippsland, including those that have been impacted by the recent bushfires."

**Member for Gippsland The Hon Darren Chester** said the Australian Government was committed to providing an effective and efficient mental health system that improves the lives of Australians living with, or at risk of, mental health issues.

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“Access to mental health services is a crucial issue in rural and remote areas, especially amid relentless drought conditions that have placed enormous pressure on local families and communities,” Mr Chester said.

“Now many of these drought-affected communities of East Gippsland have been impacted by the bushfires which have had a devastating effect on the mental health of young and old. We need to ensure we are there to help.”

**Wellways CEO Laura Collister** said Gippsland communities had experienced more than their fair share of hardships over the past decade.

“Locals recognise the need for a service like NewAccess in their communities and the response to train locals to become coaches has been overwhelming,” Ms Collister said.

“The speed with which Gippsland communities have been ready to embrace NewAccess has been extraordinary, with requests for access to the program received well in advance of services commencing.”

**Gippsland PHN CEO Amanda Proposch** said the delivery of NewAccess would add another important dimension to the range of mental health services currently commissioned by Gippsland PHN across the region.

“Gippsland has a higher-than-average rate of people with mental health conditions when compared with the Victorian average,” Ms Proposch said.

“Mental health is one of our priority health issues and Gippsland PHN has invested a significant amount of funds to support and improve primary mental healthcare.

“Importantly, we have also introduced a stepped care model for mental health, which is an evidence-based staged system.

“The aim is to start at the lowest intensive level that meets a person’s needs and people can move up and down the levels as required. The NewAccess program will be a vital part of this model by providing low-intensity support for people to manage the way they feel when they need it.”

NewAccess is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health via Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

For more information about NewAccess, visit [beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess](https://beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess)

To enquire about NewAccess-in Gippsland, call (03) 5622 4140, email NewAccess coaches at [newaccessgippsland@wellways.org](mailto:newaccessgippsland@wellways.org) or visit [www.wellways.org/newaccess-enquiry](https://www.wellways.org/newaccess-enquiry)

*Mental health professionals are available at the Beyond Blue Support Service via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support) for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).*

