

25 September 2025

## Help Patients Think About Their Health as well as Their Homes this Bushfire Season

In NSW this past weekend, the Rural Fire Service held its annual 'Get Ready' campaign reminding people living in bushfire prone areas to prepare their homes for the upcoming bushfire season.

As part of this campaign, Wentworth Healthcare, provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, is urging primary healthcare professionals working in bushfire, and other disaster-prone areas, to help patients 'Get Ready' by reminding them to consider their health as well as their homes.

The Nepean Blue Mountains region, which includes the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Lithgow local government areas, is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the country. Over the last 5 years the region has experienced multiple disasters including drought, bushfires, floods and extreme heatwaves.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay, said that while this time of year serves as a reminder for people living in disaster prone areas to assess their risk and prepare their homes and properties, it is equally important for people to consider how an emergency may impact their health or the health of someone they care for.

"In the event of a disaster, it is not uncommon for services to be unavailable for extended periods. Power, water and mobile reception are often disrupted, and road diversions may delay assistance or travel to health services," said Ms Reay.

"A natural disaster can very quickly become a serious health crisis for people with chronic illnesses, disabilities or mobility limitations who face increased risks due to isolation, reliance on power for medical equipment, or reduced access to medical services for crucial treatments or medications," she said.

Ms Reay said that primary healthcare providers, such as general practice and pharmacies, are important touch points for reminding the community to think about their health when preparing for disasters and encouraged GPs and pharmacists to speak to their vulnerable patients about their individual health risks.

"Being prepared means more than cleaning up your property. It means having enough medication on hand, knowing how to access prescriptions if you're displaced, knowing who can assist you to evacuate, making sure your medical records are available through platforms like My Health Record and ensuring you have a plan if you rely on power for medical equipment," said Ms Reay.

Ms Reay went on to say that the last few years of disasters have highlighted the importance of a coordinated response across the health sector throughout all phases of emergency management.

"Primary care providers play a crucial role during disasters, as they know their patients and their needs. They can also play a critical role in reducing the burden on emergency and hospital services. Primary Health Networks act as an important link between these providers and disaster response agencies, helping to identify local health needs and communicate accurate information," she said.



“Since devastating bushfires hit our region in 2013, our organisation has been advocating for the formal recognition of these roles in state and federal emergency management plans. Last year, we contributed to the review of the NSW Health Services Functional Area Supporting Plan (NSW HEALTHPLAN) which supports the State Emergency Management Plan. As a result of this review, primary care and Primary Health Networks are now formally included in this plan,” she said.

“This formal inclusion in the NSW HEALTHPLAN has validated primary care and Primary health Networks critical role in local disaster preparedness, response and recovery, and ensures that health agencies of all levels are working together to protect our communities,” said Ms Reay.

Ms Reay added that Primary Health Networks provide resources and support to primary healthcare professionals to help them and their patients prepare for disasters. To find out more, visit your local Primary Health Network website. A list of all Primary Health Networks is available on the Australian Government’s website via [health.gov.au/our-work/phn/contacts](https://health.gov.au/our-work/phn/contacts)

Useful resources that can assist patient’s to be prepared include the Red Cross Get Prepared App and the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness plan for people with specific needs.