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Wentworth Healthcare welcomes the Federal Government's mental health response to the bushfire crisis

Wentworth Healthcare, the provider of the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network, welcomes the Federal Government's announcement yesterday of \$76 million for mental health support in response to the current bushfire crisis.

Bushfires have directly impacted the Nepean Blue Mountains region, particularly in the areas of Lithgow and the Hawkesbury, with early indications that as many as 100 houses may have been lost, with possibly a further 40 damaged and over 300 other structures destroyed or damaged.

Wentworth Healthcare CEO, Lizz Reay said, "We are deeply saddened by the devastation this disaster has caused and recognise the impact this is having on our communities, families and friends."

"Our immediate focus is on working closely with the Australian Government Department of Health to secure this additional funding as quickly as possible, so that we can provide timely support to those who have been impacted," said Ms Reay.

"To be able to respond quickly to provide greater local support to an identified need like this, is at the heart of why Primary Health Networks were put in place," she continued.

Since the devastating 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires, Wentworth Healthcare has taken the lead in supporting the role of general practitioners in a disaster and has been advocating for an integrated approach to disaster planning that recognises the important role of primary care providers.

Ms Reay said, "As a result of what we learned in 2013, we developed the [*Planning for Disaster Management – an Emergency Preparedness Guide for Primary Health Networks and others supporting the local General Practitioner response during emergencies guide*](#). The processes we developed meant that as an organisation we were better prepared for this most recent crisis."

"Whilst our focus starts to shift to recovery, it's important to remember that in many areas, including our own region, the immediate bushfire threat is far from over. Therefore, we will continue to work directly with the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District Emergency Operations Centre and other local emergency agencies to ensure that the role of primary care is integrated into the continuing disaster response," she said.

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