

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Mental Health Support

Quick Guide for General Practitioners
in the Nepean Blue Mountains region

July 2020

Better Access Bushfire Recovery Initiative – Telehealth

All GPs can provide Medicare rebatable video telehealth mental health services for patients impacted by 2019-20 bushfires, regardless of whether patients live in an area that has been directly impacted – See page 3 for item numbers, rebate and requirements.

Bushfire Psychological Therapy Services (PTS)

All GPs can refer patients significantly impacted by bushfires to PHN commissioned PTS psychologists for up to 10 services. To be eligible for these free services, patients must be experiencing high levels of distress resulting from recent/past trauma, significant grief or loss, or existing complex mental illness (including people who may have had disrupted treatment) as a result of the recent bushfires

– See pages 4 and 5 for more details on referral and monitoring requirements.

Better Access Bushfire Recovery Initiative- Providing Focussed Psychological Strategies

1. All GPs* can refer patients impacted by the 2019-20 bushfires or first responders/ volunteers/ emergency service employees who worked during the 2019-20 bushfires, for up to 10 (per calendar year) Medicare rebatable Better Access Focused Psychological Services provided –A diagnosed mental health condition is NOT required.
 - A Mental Health Treatment Plan is NOT required.
2. GPs who have completed Mental Health Training (Level 2) and are registered as a Provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies can also provide and claim FPS bushfire items 91721 – 91731.

– See pages 6-8 for item numbers (if applicable) and more details.

Support for GPs

As well as the personal impact of crisis for the patient, others including loved ones, peers, colleagues and health professionals can be affected. There are free and confidential support services available for GPs including:

[Doctors Health Advisory Services](#)

[RACGP's GP Support Program](#)

[CRANaplus Bush Support Service](#)

– See page 9 for more information.

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Better Access Bushfire Recovery - Telehealth Services

MBS items which provide rebates for telehealth services provided by all GPs to patients with mental health issues in drought affected areas have been expanded to support patients affected by bushfires. The extension to the item numbers' descriptor is listed below:

Better Access Bushfire Recovery Telehealth Services support: Patient eligibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patient is identified by practitioner OR self-identifies being affected by bushfire (no restriction on distance or location) 			
General Practitioner	<u>2121</u>	Less than 20 min	Fee: \$44.90 85% Benefit: \$38.20
	<u>2150</u>	At least 20 min	Fee: \$86.95 85% Benefit: \$73.95
	<u>2196</u>	At least 40min	Fee: \$128.05 85% Benefit: \$108.85
Non-VR (non-specialist medical practitioners)	<u>894</u>	5 min to 25 min	Fee: \$35.90 85% Benefit: \$30.55
	<u>896</u>	25 min to 45 min	Fee: \$69.55 85% Benefit: \$59.15
	<u>898</u>	More than 45 min	Fee: \$102.45 85% Benefit: \$87.10

Bushfires Psychological Therapy Services (PTS) Stream

All GPs can refer patients to access mental health support under the [Bushfire PTS Stream](#) available for people significantly impacted by bushfires. A GP referral is required using the standard form [available online](#). Eligible patients can access 10 sessions with an allocated Allied Health Provider.

Please see details below for requirements:

Patient eligibility:

Only patients who meet the following eligibility may be referred for Patient Services:

- Patient must be experiencing **high levels of distress** resulting from recent bushfires
- Patient must **reside within the Nepean Blue Mountains PHN** region
- **No** Centrelink issued pension or Health Care Card required
- **No** Mental Health Care Plan required*

Patient progress:

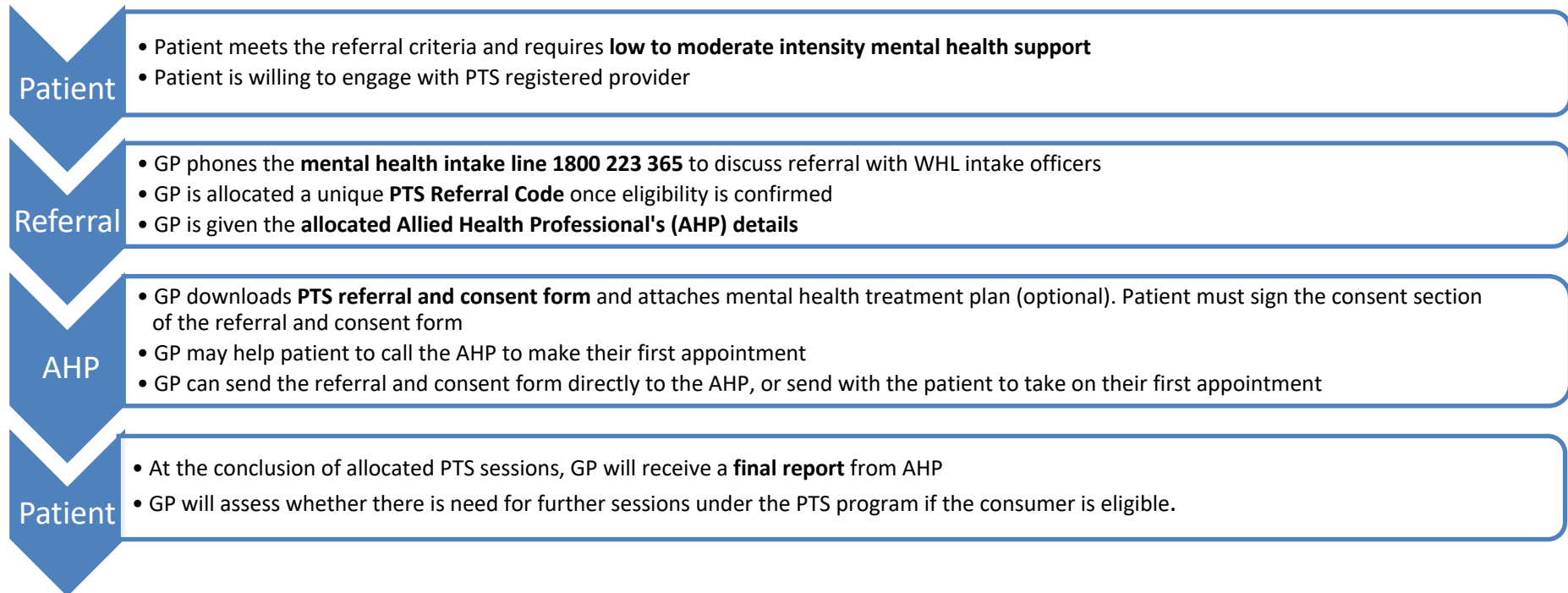
- Supplier (Allied Health Provider) must review the continued appropriateness of providing a service under this stream after the **third session**.
- If it is determined the patient no longer meets the above criteria for this stream, a referral must be made to a more appropriate service.

GP Referrals:

- Referrals will be made by the Referrer on a [standard form](#) available on the NBMPHN website
- A referral is to a **maximum of 10 sessions** for the duration of the Bushfire PTS stream (ends 30 June 2021)
- Where appropriate, couples or family members who meet eligibility criteria may be referred and see together rather than individually

**GPs may choose to complete a mental health treatment plan at their discretion*

Accessing PTS for Bushfire Support



For alternate referral pathways:



Patients who would benefit from low intensity CBT based coaching sessions should instead be referred to other services. For alternative options, please see the [Mental Health Navigation Tool](#) or other [Bushfire Support Services](#). Young patients aged 12 years to 25 years can also access support provided by [Headspace services](#).

Better Access Bushfire Recovery Program Overview

Patients accessing support:

- Individuals affected by bushfires can access up to [10 mental health treatment services \(face to face and via telehealth\)](#) per calendar year (available between January 2020 and December 2021).
- Individuals **do not require** a diagnosed mental health condition, GP mental health treatment plan or referral to access these services.
- **All GPs** can refer patients for bushfires support mental health services.
- These mental health treatment services can be provided by **Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Social Workers and GPs** (who have completed appropriate mental health training).
- Access to the services is not restricted to people living in areas directly affected by bushfires.
- These are in addition to the 10 psychological therapy sessions available under the existing [Better Access Initiative](#).



For GPs who wish to provide mental health treatment services under the bushfire program:

- GPs must have **completed** [mental health skills training \(Level 2\)](#) to provide focussed psychological strategies under the new item numbers (91721 to 91731).
- GPs must be registered with Medicare as a [Provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies](#).
- GPs can claim under the new item numbers from **17 January 2020 to 31 December 2021**.

Providing Mental Health Treatment Services for Bushfires Recovery

Item Numbers: For services provided by General Practitioners

Practitioners must have completed Mental Health Skills Training (Level 1 and 2) to provide Focussed Psychological Services under item numbers 91721 – 91731.

In GP consulting room:		
<u>91721</u>	< 30 min to 40 min	Fee: \$110.85 85% Benefit: 85% \$94.25
<u>91725</u>	> 40 min	Fee: \$158.60 85% Benefit: \$134.85
<u>91729</u> Via video conference	< 30 min to 40min	Fee: \$110.85 85% Benefit: \$94.25
<u>91731</u> Via video conference	> 40min	Fee: \$158.50 85% Benefit: \$134.85

Place other than GP consulting room:		
<u>91723</u>	< 30min to 40 min	Derived fee (from item 91721): Up to 6 patients: \$110.85 plus \$31.00 divided by number patients seen 7 or more patients: \$110.85 plus \$2.40 per patient
<u>91727</u>	> 40min	Derived fee (from item 91725): Up to 6 patients: \$158.60 plus \$31.00 divided by number patients seen 7 or more patients: \$158.60 plus \$2.40 per patient

Item Numbers: For services provided by other Medical Practitioners

Practitioners must have completed Mental Health Skills Training (Level 1 and 2) to provide Focussed Psychological Services under item numbers 91721 – 91731.

In medical practitioner consulting room:			Additional requirements:
<u>91283</u>	< 30 min to 40 min	Fee: \$88.70 85% Benefit: \$75.40	
<u>91286</u>	> 40 min	Fee: \$126.90 85% Benefit: \$107.90	
<u>91371</u> Via video conference	< 30 min to 40min	Fee: \$88.70 85% Benefit: \$75.40	<u>Not</u> an admitted patient
<u>91372</u> Via video conference	> 40min	Fee: \$126.90 85% Benefit: \$107.90	<u>Not</u> an admitted patient

Place other than medical practitioner consulting room:		
<u>91285</u>	< 30min to 40 min	Derived fee (from item 91283): Up to 6 patients: \$88.70 plus \$24.80 divided by number patients seen 7 or more patients: \$88.70 plus \$1.90 per patient
<u>91287</u>	> 40min	Derived fee (from item 91286): Up to 6 patients: \$126.90 plus \$24.80 divided by number patients seen 7 or more patients: \$126.90 plus \$1.90 per patient

Support Services for Practitioners:

As well as the personal impact of crisis for the patient, others including loved ones, peers, colleagues and health professionals can be affected.

[RACGP's GP Support Program](#) is a free service offered to Australian **RACGP members** registered as medical practitioners. Available for face-to-face or telephone counselling, GPs can access 3 free sessions, Mondays to Fridays 8:30am to 6pm.

[Doctors Health Advisory Services](#) offer a telephone help line for personal and confidential advice for **practitioners, students, colleagues and family members** in NSW and ACT. This service is available 24/7 on 02 9437 6552.

[CRANaplus Bush Support Service](#) is a free and confidential telephone counselling service for **rural and remote area health professionals** and their families. This service is available 24/7 on 1800 805 391.

The [Australasian Doctors' Health Network \(adhn\)](#) provide a list of support services available for specific health profession groups, including **indigenous doctors, international doctors and junior doctors**.

[Beyond Blue's Health Services Support Program](#) focuses on anxiety, depression and suicide support among **healthcare staff** across Australia. They also have [online support forums](#) for people to connect anonymously, as well as the 24/7 hotline 1300 22 4636.

For immediate support contact [Lifeline Australia](#) is available 24/7 on 13 11 14

See [RACGP's Self Care and Mental Health Resources for General Practitioners](#)

A reminder it is okay to not be okay and that there is always support available no matter who or where you are. Thank you for your service and support.

Bushfire Support Resources:

For health professionals

[Bushfire Response and Recovery](#) (online resources)

[HealthPathways](#) (online referral pathways including mental health and disaster management)

[Mental Health Services in the Nepean Blue Mountains region](#) (online mental health navigation tool)

For patients

[Mental Health Services in the Nepean Blue Mountains region](#) (online mental health navigation tool)

[Community bushfire support information](#) (online resources)

[Health Support Services for individuals affected by bushfires](#) (printable fact sheet)

Requirements for GPs to provide Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS)

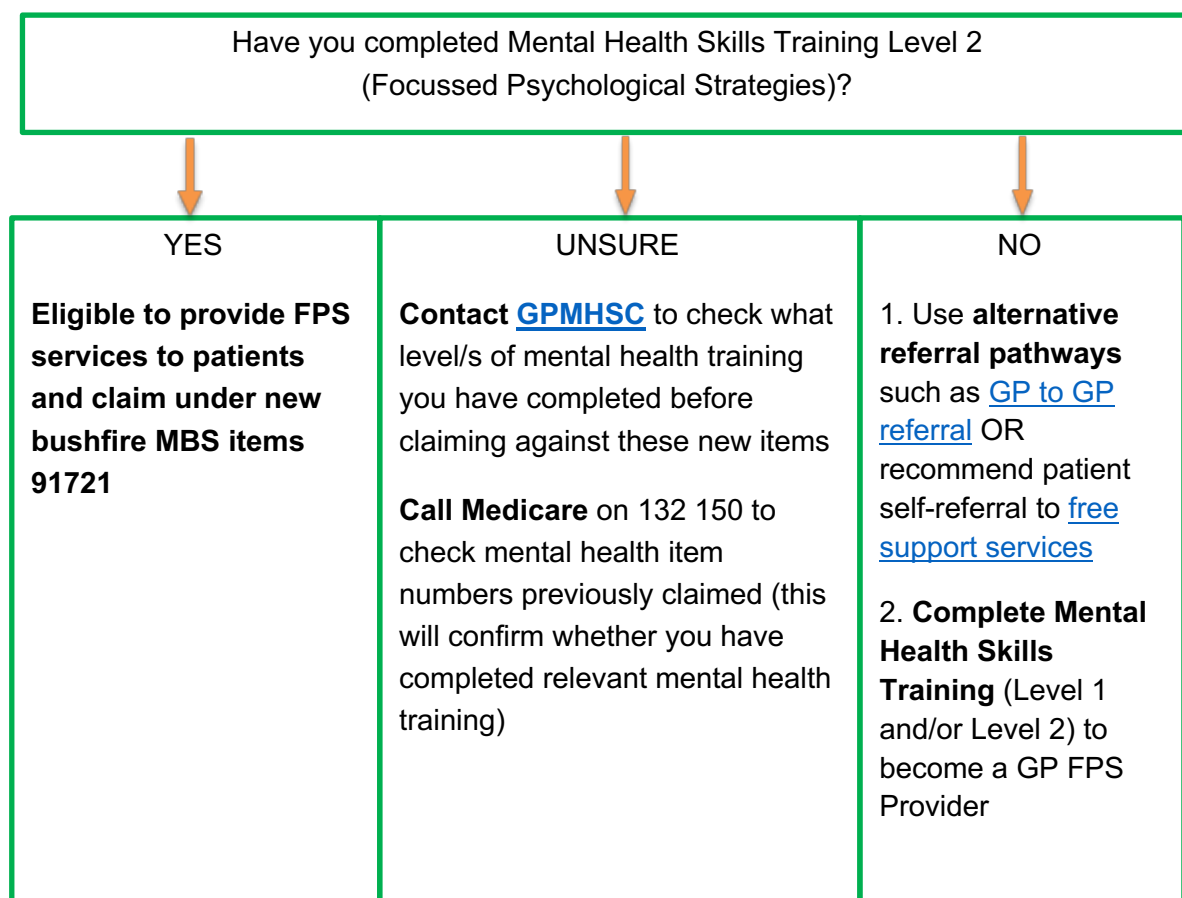
GPs must be a registered Provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies to provide services and claim under the new bushfire items (91721-91731).

Eligible GPs are those who:

- Completed [mental health skills training](#) (Level 2) to provide focussed psychological strategies to patients.
 - Completed an accredited Focussed Psychological Strategies CPD in the last CPD triennium in (2017-19) in order to maintain their provider status for the new CPD triennium 2020-22.
- Have registered with Medicare as a [Provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies](#) (form required)



Before claiming against new Bushfire MBS items (91721 – 91731), confirm your provider eligibility for focussed psychological strategies.



Mental Health Skills Training Requirements

[GPMHSC](#) set the standards for GP training in mental health required to gain and maintain access to the mental health Medicare item numbers.

There are two levels of accredited mental health training GPs must complete to become a FPS Provider:

Mental Health Skills Training Level 1 (Modular Pathway):

GPs can assess, treat, plan and review mental health issues commonly presented in general practice. There are two different pathways to complete MHST activities (see diagram below).

To become an FPS Provider, practitioners must complete both a [Mental Health Skills Training Core Module](#) and a [Clinical Enhancement Module](#).

Mental Health Skills Training Level 2 (Focussed Psychological Skills Training):

Specific treatment strategies developed from evidence-based psychological therapies. GPs who undertake this training to become Focussed Psychological Therapy Strategies can access higher MBS items.

See [RACGP courses](#) available

See [ACCRM courses](#) available

Mental Health Training Pathway

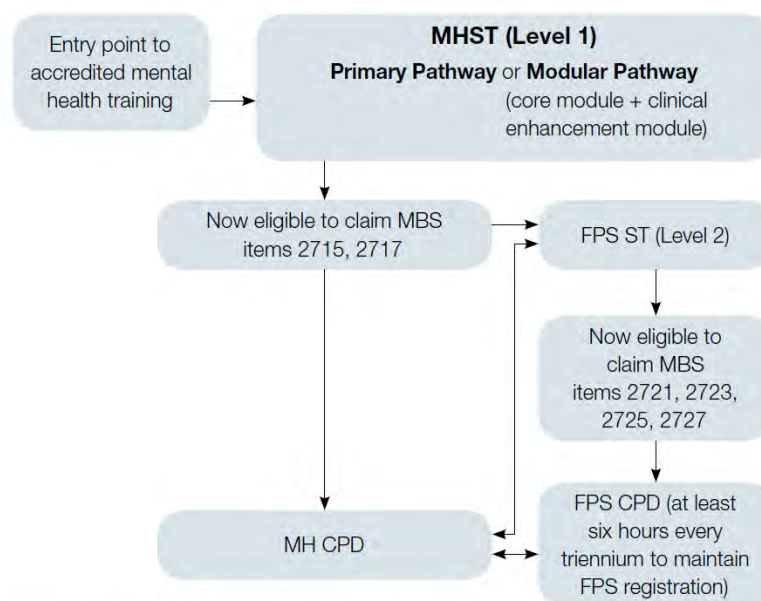


Figure 1. GPMHSC-accredited pathway for GP mental health training

Table A2. Mental health consultations that GPs can provide if they have completed Mental Health Skills Training

Item number	Description	Rebate (amount Medicare will reimburse GP/patient)
2715	Preparation of a GPMHTP for a patient lasting at least 20 minutes but less than 40 minutes	\$92.50
2717	Preparation of a GPMHTP for a patient lasting at least 40 minutes	\$136.25
2712	Review of a GPMHTP prepared by a GP	\$72.85
2713	Taking relevant history, identifying presenting problem(s), providing treatment, advice and/or referral for other services or treatments and documenting the outcomes of the consultation, on a patient in relation to a mental disorder and lasting at least 20 minutes	\$72.85

Item number non-VR	Description	Rebate (amount Medicare will reimburse GP/ patient)
281	Preparation of an MHTP for a patient lasting at least 20 minutes but less than 40 minutes by a medical practitioner	\$74.00
282	Preparation of an MHTP for a patient lasting at least 40 minutes by a medical practitioner	\$109.00
277	Review of an MHTP prepared by a medical practitioner	\$58.30
279	Taking relevant history, identifying presenting problem(s), providing treatment, advice and/or referral for other services or treatments and documenting the outcomes of the consultation, on a patient in relation to a mental disorder and lasting at least 20 minutes by a medical practitioner	\$58.30

For more information visit:

[GPMHSC Mental Health Training Standards 2020-22](#)

[GPMHSC mental health training and education FAQs](#)

How to become a GP Provider of Focussed Psychological Strategies

GPs must have completed Mental Health Skills Training (Level 1 and 2) to provide Focussed Psychological Strategies to patients under the [Better Access Bushfire Recovery Initiative](#).

How do I become a registered provider of FPS?

1. Complete an accredited [MHST course](#).
2. Complete an accredited [FPS ST course](#).
3. Complete [application form](#) to register as a GP provider of FPS with Medicare Australia and attach certificate of completion to gpmhsc@racgp.org.au
4. The GPMHSC will forward your application to Medicare Australia
5. Medicare will mail you a letter within 6 – 8 weeks, confirming your eligibility as a FPS provider and access to Better Access MBS items 2721 – 2727 (or non-VR equivalent; 283 – 287) AND new Bushfire MBS items (91721 – 91731). *Please note: you cannot claim against these item numbers until you receive this letter.*

How do I maintain my registration as an FPS provider?

GPs must complete at least one FPS CPD course every triennium (beginning after the first triennium in which FPS ST was completed).

This will ensure continued use of MBS items relevant to provision of FPS (2721 – 2717 (or non-VR equivalent; 283 – 287), and new Bushfire MBS items (91721 – 91731).

GPMHSC (General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration) is the body responsible for accrediting mental health training for GPs. For further inquiries or information [visit GPMHSC](#).

Quick Summary FAQs

How does the Better Access Bushfires Telehealth initiative differ from the routine Better Access Telehealth services available?

Unlike the existing telehealth services, there is no restriction on distance or location for the provider or patient accessing mental health services for bushfire support. An existing relationship between the consulting practitioner and patient is not required.

If a patient is not able to access support under the PTS Bushfire Stream, what other mental health support services are available?

Visit [Bushfire Support Services](#) for alternate support services and referral pathways.

Who can access the mental health services under the Better Access Bushfires initiative?

Any individual who been identified by a health professional OR has self-identified as being impacted by 2019-20 bushfires can access free mental health support.

Individuals do not need to reside in an area directly impacted by the bushfires to access up to 10 mental health treatment services available. This is in addition to the 10 sessions available under the existing Better Access Initiative (which requires a GP mental health treatment plan).

Which GPs can provide Focussed Psychological Strategies under the bushfire initiative?

Practitioners who have completed Mental Health Skills Training Level 2 can deliver Focussed Psychological Strategies. They must be registered as an FPS Provider before claiming any new item numbers (91721-91371).



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