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MEDIA RELEASE

Medicare must support ongoing mental health of flood victims

Australia's peak body for all psychologists says those impacted by the Victorian and Tasmanian floods should be able to access vital mental health services under Medicare.

For the past two years, the **Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi)** has been calling for the Medicare item numbers, originally introduced after the 2020 bushfire crisis, to be reinstated and extended to include any large scale disaster, pandemic or traumatic event.

AAPi Executive Director, Tegan Carrison, said it was vital for people impacted by a natural disaster like the floods to be able to access quality psychological care quickly and easily.

"This current flood disaster means that unfortunately, demand for the kind of mental health care covered by these item numbers is again evident.

"These Medicare item numbers, once specifically created for bushfire victims, must be reinstated and expanded to cover any form of disaster," she said.

"While disaster relief payments might help victims in the short term, the ongoing mental health impacts of a disaster can be devastating.

"We are calling on the Federal Government to be proactive in establishing trauma and disaster recovery item numbers so people can receive the support they need, when they need it.

"Research indicates that if early intervention and support is accessed, future negative impacts are reduced," Ms Carrison said.

"Self-referral to psychologists was a key part of the bushfire response item numbers. This meant that clients did not have to wait until a GP was available and were not required to have a diagnosed mental health condition, prior to requesting psychological services for support after a disaster."

Ms Carrison said this reduces barriers to access and reduces costs, time delays and any stigma around seeking mental health support.

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Tegan Carrison is the Executive Director of the [Australian Association of Psychologists Inc \(AAPi\)](#), a not-for-profit peak body representing all psychologists in Australia.

About Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi)

The AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for all psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate

grassroots psychologists, the AAPI's primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services.