

MEDIA RELEASE – Monday 30 March 2020

Mental health and well-being support for pharmacists suffering the double whammy of bushfires and now COVID-19

The Pharmacists' Support Service (PSS) is pleased to announce the availability of grants to support the mental health and well-being of Australian pharmacists and pharmacy staff who having been impacted by bushfires and are now facing the double whammy of COVID-19.

The funds have been provided by an anonymous donor and distribution is being facilitated by PSS. There are twenty grants of \$500 each. In line with the purpose of PSS the grants are available to support mental health and well-being activities for those in pharmacy who have recently experienced the impact of bushfires.

PSS President, John Coppock advises "We are very aware that pharmacists and staff in bushfire affected pharmacies are still in the early recovery stage after the bushfires around Australia which commenced November 2019 and continued in a variety of locations through to February 2020. Now these pharmacists and pharmacy staff are facing the stress of dealing with COVID-19. This new stress may be a tipping point for some and we are keen to support their mental health and well-being."

The \$500 grants can be used to assist with:

1. Out of pocket expenses associated with professional counselling in relation to stress and trauma associated with the bushfires (expenses above any Medicare rebate if eligible).
2. Provision of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) by a pharmacy to enable all staff to access counselling in a confidential manner. Employee Assistance Professional Association of Australasia lists by state members who meet their standards at <https://www.eapaa.org.au>.
3. Locum cover for a sole pharmacist to enable them to attend to their health and well-being or personal affairs.

All enquiries to be sent by email to pss1300244910@gmail.com and addressed to Kay Dunkley with the title "Bushfire Mental Health Support". Please include your phone number to enable further contact. Application forms will be supplied on request.

Whilst there is no closing date for applications, grants will only be available until funds are exhausted. The total number of grants is limited to twenty.

PSS is aiming to distribute the grants as widely as possible among the pharmacy community but this does not preclude an application in more than one category or for more than one individual in pharmacy. The grant may not cover the full cost but is a subsidy to expenses incurred.

PSS continues to be available to provide support all pharmacists and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic on 1300244910 every day of the year between 8am and 11pm AEST.

Media contact: Kay Dunkley 0407 755 598