



## Amended MBS mental health and wellbeing telehealth items

Last updated: 13 January 2020

- From 10 January 2020, people whose mental health is adversely affected by bushfire in the 2019-20 financial year can access MBS mental health and well-being services via telehealth.
- The mental health and well-being telehealth service is provided by GPs and medical practitioners using existing MBS items: 2121, 2150, 2196 (for GPs) and 894, 896, 898 (for medical practitioners).
- Eligible patients may either be identified by a GP or medical practitioner as being affected by bushfire or they may self-identify themselves and request a telehealth service. The service is available to anyone whose mental health has been affected by the bushfire crisis, and is not restricted to people living in areas directly affected by bushfire.

### What are the changes?

MBS items 2121, 2150, 2196 and 894, 896, 898 were introduced on 1 November 2018 to enable people living in drought-declared communities to access mental health and well-being services from their usual doctor. The MBS requirements for these patients have not changed.

In addition, new MBS requirements for patients whose mental health is adversely affected by bushfire in the 2019-20 financial year have been introduced:

- the patient is identified by a GP as being affected by bushfire; or
- the patient self-identifies as being affected by bushfire; and
- the attendance is by video conference; and
- the patient is not an admitted patient.

There is no minimum distance for telehealth services provided to patients affected by bushfire.

### Why are the changes being made?

The amendments to MBS items 2121, 2150, 2196 and 894, 896, 898 allow patients affected by the bushfire emergency to access essential mental health and wellbeing support, helping to overcome workforce shortages in areas impacted by bushfires and improving provider choice for individuals, families and first responders.

### What does this mean for providers?

GPs and medical practitioners will have greater flexibility to provide services to patients who may not be able to attend a medical practice in person, or who may prefer to receive a telehealth consultation.



## How will these changes affect patients?

Patients who consider their mental health has been impacted by the bushfire disaster will be able to access essential mental health and well-being services by telehealth anywhere in Australia. They will not be required to have a referral to access the services, and there will be no restriction on the number of services used.

## Who was consulted on the changes?

Due to the nature of the bushfire emergency, it was not reasonably possible to undertake normal consultations with stakeholders prior to the amendment of the MBS items.

## How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health will monitor the use of the new MBS telehealth items by GPs and non-specialist medical practitioners. Use of the items that does not seem to be in accordance with the relevant Medicare guidelines and legislation will be actioned appropriately.

## Where can I find more information?

The full item descriptor(s) and information on other changes to the MBS can be found on the MBS Online website at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au). You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting [MBS Online](#) and clicking 'Subscribe'.

The Department of Health provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the Health Insurance Act and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email [askMBS@health.gov.au](mailto:askMBS@health.gov.au).

Subscribe to '[News for Health Professionals](#)' on the Department of Human Services website and you will receive regular news highlights.

If you are seeking advice in relation to Medicare billing, claiming, payments, or obtaining a provider number, please go to the Health Professionals page on the Department of Human Services website or contact the Department of Human Services on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

The data file for software vendors is expected to become available on [date] and can be accessed via the MBS Online website under the [Downloads](#) page.

*Please note that the information provided is a general guide only. It is ultimately the responsibility of treating practitioners to use their professional judgment to determine the most clinically appropriate services to provide, and then to ensure that any services billed to Medicare fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the legislation.*

*This sheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above, and does not account for MBS changes since that date.*