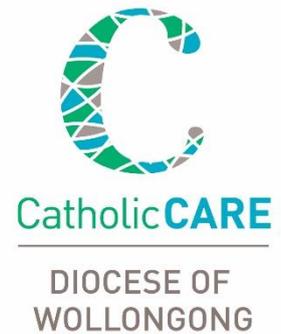


Media Release

For immediate release

8 January 2020



CatholicCare offers free trauma counselling to people impacted by bushfire

CatholicCare Wollongong have announced free trauma counselling and *Community Connect* meetings to support people in bushfire affected areas.

Director of CatholicCare, Mr Michael Austin, said: "The Christmas and New Year period has been defined by significant trauma and devastation from bushfires burning in many areas of the country. Fires have significantly impacted large tracts of our diocese, which includes the Macarthur, Southern Highlands, Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions, going as far south as Ulladulla.

"CatholicCare Wollongong have boosted phone support staff and specialised trauma counselling staff to meet the needs of the community throughout the diocese. We are providing free counselling over the phone as well as face-to-face support people affected by the bushfires. We have trained trauma counsellors locally, who are ready to support those in need, giving them an opportunity to debrief and receive qualified support.

"We will also be hosting *Community Connect* morning teas in our Nowra and Campbelltown offices. This will provide people with a place to debrief in a supportive environment with trained staff who can help navigate a way forward. An announcement will be made shortly to list the days and times for *Community Connect* meetings.

CatholicCare Wollongong is working in collaboration with the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference's nationwide response and strategy to this crisis. We are also part of the Diocese of Wollongong's interagency alliance with Bishop Brian Mascord's office and Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong to assist bushfire-affected communities in our diocese through our parishes and schools."

To talk to a CatholicCare trauma counsellor over the phone or book a face-to-face meeting, phone 02 42 549 395 (lines are open Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm) or email intakeservices@catholiccare.dow.org.au.

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CatholicCare is the Social Services Agency of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Wollongong, supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

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