



David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

Media statement

May 17, 2017

Psychology services easier to access in the bush thanks to new Medicare teleconferencing rebate secured by Maranoa MP

IN MOVE for better mental health support in the bush – those living in rural and remote communities will be able to claim a new Medicare rebate for online teleconferenced psychology services thanks to advocacy by Maranoa MP David Littleproud.

“This is an absolute game-changer for better mental health support in the bush and means rural and remote Australians – for the first time – will be able to access psychology services covered by Medicare through teleconferencing,” Mr Littleproud said.

“Previously, people travelled hundreds-of-kilometres to a town to access face-to-face psychology services because there was no Medicare rebate if you saw the practitioner via teleconferencing.”

The Maranoa MP – whose electorate spans more than 42% of rural Queensland and includes some of the state’s most remote communities – pushed for the tele-health Medicare rebate as one of his first items of business when he was elected last September.

“Mental health and better access to support in the bush is raised with me almost every day, especially when people are faced with elements outside their control, like drought, so this was an important issue which I felt needed to be addressed quickly,” he said.

“I was moved by the stories I heard in Maranoa and I conveyed this need to the Federal Health Minister so the Medicare rebate would include teleconferenced psychology services for those living in rural and remote areas.

“Better telecommunications in the bush is a major focus for me so it just made sense that the Coalition Government’s superfast internet investment, through the NBN, would open the possibility of better health services through online teleconferencing.

“I’d like to thank the Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, and Regional Communications Minister Fiona Nash for not only recognising the demand for psychological services is growing but also their action in this \$9 million investment in rural health.”

The Coalition Federal Government included the new telehealth initiative in last week’s Budget at a cost of \$9 million over four years between 2017-18 and 2020-21.

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