



David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

Media Statement

November 2, 2017

Boost for mental health services in the bush now available

STOIC bushies often push a doctor's appointment down the 'to-do' list, especially when it comes to mental health, in rural communities as you may have to travel vast distances to see a practitioner but what if it was made easier to seek help?

Maranoa MP David Littleproud said the tyranny of distance is a barrier that's been removed thanks to improved access to psychological services, under a new telehealth initiative, which is now available for those living in rural and remote areas.

"I often hear travel times and the fear of others knowing you're receiving help stops people from putting up their hand for assistance – so that's why we've introduced this new service to improve mental health access," Mr Littleproud said.

"This new measure means you can now claim the Medicare rebate for online videoconferencing mental health consultations with psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists and I think this is a major step forward to support better mental health in the bush."

Under the new Better Access program expanded arrangements, up to seven of the 10 sessions currently available through Medicare mental health plans will be available via telehealth.

"One of the first four sessions will be face-to-face, to help build a personal connection with the treating mental health professional, but after that you can receive support in the comfort of your own home," Mr Littleproud said.

"From November 1 this year, those living in rural and regional communities will be able to claim a Medicare rebate for timely and convenient online videoconferencing consultations with psychologists and other allied mental health professionals.

"Not only does this new initiative significantly reduce the inconvenience, time and expense of having to travel to larger centres or a major city, but also mental health professionals will be able to connect sooner with their rural and remote patients in need of psychological services."

Fact box:

- The Coalition Federal government will invest \$9.1 million, over four years, in this initiative to support better mental health support in rural and remote communities.

- The Medicare psychological services via telehealth will be available for patients living in Modified Monash Model regions four to seven, which cover smaller country towns and remote and very remote locations.
- To check if you're in an eligible rural or remote location, enter your address or general location on the Doctor Connect website at:
http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/MMM_locator
- If you're interested in using telehealth psychological services, please speak with your GP.

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