

14 December 2022



AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE ASSOCIATION MEDIA RELEASE

REDUCTION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES MAY CAUSE HARM

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) notes with disappointment the reduction of Medicare-funded mental health sessions from 20 to 10 to occur by the end of 2022.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that the reduction in funding would hurt the people accessing the service and would also place extra pressure on police services across Australia.

"Mental health incidents are becoming increasingly prevalent for police members; to reduce services just before Christmas, alongside an explosion in the cost of living, will result in significant negative outcomes for the community.

"The ten mental health sessions that the Government is cutting could be the difference between someone's mental health being good and someone being hospitalised. This decision will come at a high cost to all levels of government in Australia in the long run — most notably in terms of cost of treatment, the cost to the community, and productivity.

"The Government should be enhancing and refining programs that support mental health, not reducing services and placing further pressure on already stretched policing, health, and mental health services. If the system isn't working or delivering results as intended — change it for the better, don't take it away.

"We know that police officers in particular use the Medicare service as they fear utilising their organisations' welfare networks or employee assistance programs. Those ten sessions may be the difference between a fully functioning police officer and an officer unable to work due to mental health injuries," Mr Caruana said.

In response to this announcement, the AFPA is issuing a challenge to the Commonwealth Government to better support Australian Federal Police (AFP) employees, retired AFP veterans, and former members.

"We know that AFP veterans use this vital service as there is zero support from the Commonwealth Government. These members risked their lives and their health to protect the Australian community, yet there are no government schemes or initiatives to support them in return.

"This is why we are asking the Government to introduce an AFP 'Blue Card' to provide mental health support to current and former AFP officers and staff who have seen operational activity during their career.

For comments:

AFPA Media and Government Relations Manager Troy Roberts - (02) 6285 1677 – troy.roberts@afpa.org.au