

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ICLA opens its doors to people in mental health need due to bushfires**

An organisation that has been helping people overcome mental health challenges for more than 30 years has thrown open its doors to help people who are dealing with trauma as a result of Australia's deadly bushfires.

Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA) will launch an Australian-first mental health recovery pilot program later in the year and in preparation, has just renovated an eight-bedroom custom-furnished house in Bondi.

ICLA CEO Rachel Green said that ICLA has been happy to place its plans on hold for a few months and respond to an urgent need for residential respite care among families, firefighters, first responders and people from bushfire affected communities.

The building "Wollemi" is named after the famous Wollemi Pines which have thrived against all odds and have strong root systems that connect to each other below the surface.

"Our eight-bedroom house is ideal for people who are experiencing mental health impacts as a result of the bushfire crisis including exhaustion, distress or trauma, and who would benefit from a brief stay in a non-clinical, supportive environment to rest, reflect and recharge. It will be available for one or two week stays from January 2020.

"Our guests will be supported by on-site staff who are trained in non-clinical approaches that are proven to support mental wellbeing such as listening, open dialogue, and art and music therapy.

"We know that people have different needs as a result of this type of crisis. For many, receiving support within their local community will help maintain resilience but for some a brief stay in a supportive environment away from the directly impacted community can be beneficial to recuperate.

"We are grateful to the Australian Department of Health which provided ICLA with \$1.25 million (through its Community Health and Hospitals Program) and look forward to launching our new service in due course.

"In the meantime, we will work with Primary Health Networks, communities and organisations in affected regions to identify people who can most benefit from our service and we look forward to playing our small part," Ms Green said.

### **About Independent Community Living Australia**

For more than 30 years, Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA) has been supporting people with mental and physical health challenges to live independently, in a safe home, and feel part of the community. It does this by:

- providing supported long and short-term accommodation
- coordinating care and support services (including being an NDIS provider)
- helping people build confidence and daily living skills
- offering quality community programs to encourage people to make new social connections.

**For more information or to make a donation please visit [icla.org.au](http://icla.org.au).**

**Enquiries:**

**Wollemei@icla.org.au**