

# Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier



Wednesday, 23 September 2020

## **SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND AOD SERVICES AND THEIR WORKERS**

The Victorian Government is ensuring non-government organisations who deliver mental health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services are ready to respond and to prevent possible outbreaks, as coronavirus case numbers come down – and we take steps to COVID Normal.

Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley today announced over \$21 million in funding to support the ongoing safe operation of mental health and AOD services across the state.

In an effort to reduce the need for staff to work across multiple mental health and AOD sites, we will provide \$5 million to increase hourly rates or provide retainers for NGO workers, as well as funding consistent backfill for staff who may be unable to work due to exposure or contraction of coronavirus.

\$1 million is also being invested to extend operating hours to support access for clients after hours, to reduce the number of people accessing the service at once.

More than \$6.5 million in grants will be made available for practical minor infrastructure upgrades to reduce contamination risk - such as installing sensor taps, or air conditioning to improve air flow and modifying outdoor facilities.

Over \$8.6 million will support increased cleaning and sanitation capacity for the sector and equip staff with infection control training – with funding available for backfill staff to make training attendance easier.

Mental health and AOD services share some common risk factors as those in general health services and aged care and disability residential services, such as shared facilities and servicing vulnerable cohorts – this funding will ensure these vital services are able to safely care for Victorians during the coronavirus pandemic and through recovery.

These initiatives were established as a result of feedback provided by community sector services through a series of round tables with the Government.

This new funding builds on the almost \$200 million the Victorian Government has already invested in targeted mental health support during the pandemic to boost and consolidate surge capacity for frontline services, fast track recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and tailor support for small businesses and schools.

One of the many programs this funding has supported includes the new Partners in Wellbeing service - a free, state-wide one-on-one counselling service providing Victorians with ongoing wellbeing coaching and emotional support. The service helps people explore the reasons causing stress and anxiety helping them get back in control.

Partners in Wellbeing service is available to anyone in Victoria by contacting 1300 375 330. Support continues to be available through Lifeline Australia (13 11 14), Beyond Blue (1800 512 348), or Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800).

### **Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews**

*"This support ensures all of our health services have every tool necessary to prevent and respond to outbreaks as we continue along the path to COVID Normal."*

*"These measures help us further protect some of our most vulnerable Victorians and those who work tirelessly to support them."*

For information about coronavirus visit [coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 675 398.

## **Quotes attributable to Mental Health Minister Martin Foley**

*“The non-government mental health and alcohol and other drugs providers have stepped up during the pandemic and we want to acknowledge their ongoing commitment to providing quality and safe care for their clients.”*

*“We’re ensuring these vital support services are safe and ready for those who need them.”*