

# Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier



Wednesday, 3 March 2021

## GIVING VICTORIANS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT CLOSE TO HOME

Victorians will be able to get the treatment they need sooner, closer to home and family, with the Andrews Labor Government fast-tracking the delivery of six mental health priority sites across the state.

The six sites will be the first of up to sixty across the state, providing a 'front-door' for anyone in the community to access mental health support including a range of therapies and expanded wellbeing treatment.

Establishing the new *local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services* is a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. They will help Victorians access help in the community earlier, before they need to access a hospital or when they reach a crisis point.

The locations, recommended by experts, include:

- **Benalla** which has the highest per capita level of suicide over the 2011-2020 period, as well as one of the highest per capita levels of suicide attempts presenting to emergency departments
- **Brimbank** which has one of the highest levels of very high psychological distress (a measure of anxiety and depression) recorded across Victoria
- **Frankston** which has one of the highest per capita rates of suicide attempts presenting at emergency departments in 2020-21 and one of the highest per capita rates of suicide over the 2011-2020 period
- **Greater Geelong** which consistently has higher than state averages for self-harm presentations per capita in all recent years
- **Latrobe Valley** which has one of the highest rates of mental health presentations to emergency departments, including for self-harm and suicide attempts
- **Whittlesea** which has one of the highest levels of community mental health contacts per capita, as well as significant evidence surrounding ongoing mental health issues related to the Black Saturday bushfires

The Department of Health will immediately investigate options to establish services within each priority region. This will involve a consultation process with established local providers. The first of these local services would open from mid-2022, with all six of the initial services open by the end of 2022.

The new services will work to a '*how can we help?*' model, helping people seamlessly access the right support for them, close to home, across a transformed mental health and wellbeing system.

They will operate in partnership with reformed, area-based adult and older adult mental health and wellbeing services, and specialist statewide services – ensuring the right level of care is available in the right time.

The Royal Commission report contains 65 recommendations that establish a blueprint to transform mental health support and care to make it accessible, flexible and responsive – free of stigma and discrimination.

The Labor Government will implement every single recommendation.

Alongside the pandemic, mental health is one of the greatest challenges facing Victorians right now. The Labor Government is determined to build a mental health system that will support all of us – now and into the future.

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Around 1 in 5 Victorians will experience a mental health problem this year. Suicide is consistently the leading cause of death for people aged between 15 and 44.

Last year, the Labor Government delivered a record \$869 million funding boost to the mental health system as part of the *Victorian Budget 2020-21*.

This investment will continue work on the Royal Commission's urgent interim report recommendations – supporting strained services now so anyone who is struggling can get the support they need, whenever they need it.

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

*“We’re building our mental health system from the ground up. That means a system that actually provides people the care they need early – before they reach the ED, and in too many cases, before it’s too late.”*

*“These new services will give Victorians a pathway to recovery close to home and in their own community.”*

#### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino**

*“Today we take the very first step to implement the ambitious agenda set out in the final report. It will take time, but these new localised mental health services will provide better coverage and easier access to services for Victorians, not matter where they live.”*

*“This is all about treating people early in the community, rather than too late in hospital.”*