

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health



Thursday, 1 July 2021

NEW SUPPORT SERVICE ANNOUNCED FOR LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

The Andrews Labor Government is helping LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families get the support and care they need with a new state-wide counselling service called Qspace.

Minister for Mental Health James Merlino and Minister for Equality Martin Foley today announced Drummond Street Services and its community partners across Victoria will receive \$2.5 million government funding to run the new service.

Qspace will provide specialist family counselling, assistance, online resources and information for LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families to help foster support and understanding. The aim of the program is to keep families together and make sure LGBTIQ+ Victorians feel safe and valued.

The service will leverage from Queerspace – Drummond Street Services' existing Melbourne-based LGBTIQ+ health and wellbeing support service which provides counselling, peer support and professional development.

Qspace will also be available through a network of regional and rural community partners including Anglicare Victoria (Gippsland and Kyneton), Mallee Family Care (Mildura), Upper Murray Family Care (Wodonga) and Drummond Street Service – Queerspace (Geelong).

LGBTIQ+ Victorians are a diverse community and they continue to face stigma and discrimination. As a result, they are more likely than the broader community to experience poor mental health, suicidal thoughts, homelessness, substance abuse and intimate partner and family violence. The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated challenges being faced by some LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

The first Qspace counselling services are expected to commence in the coming months.

Founded in 1887, Drummond Street Services is one of the longest-serving welfare organisations in Australia and has run counselling and groups for LGBTIQ+ people since the 1960s.

Ensuring LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families have access to services when they need them is part of the Labor Government's continued efforts to achieve equality for LGBTIQ+ communities.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"This new service will ensure that all LGBTIQ+ Victorians and their families, no matter where they live, can access safe and inclusive counselling to support their mental health."

"Having worked with and alongside LGBTIQ+ Victorians for many years, Drummond Street Services and their expansive network is perfectly placed to lead this important work."

Quote attributable to Minister for Equality Martin Foley

"We won't rest until equality is achieved for our LGBTIQ+ communities. This service brings us another step closer to LGBTIQ+ Victorians having the same opportunities to achieve good mental health as anyone else."

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