

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health



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MENTAL HEALTH BUILDING BLITZ BEGINS IN GEELONG

Residents in Greater Geelong will soon have access to better local mental health support with a construction blitz now underway on two major projects thanks to the Andrews Labor Government.

Work on a new world-class 16-bed acute mental health facility at Barwon Health's McKellar Centre will create and sustain more than 230 local construction jobs when Victorians need them most. It will also deliver on a key recommendation made by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The facility's frame will be constructed as individual modules off-site, then transported and completed on-site – reducing disruption to the operational hospital and local residents while construction is underway.

Designed in consultation with people with lived experience of the mental health system, the facility will deliver more than 5,800 days of care – which equates to approximately 355 people each year.

The facility will reduce pressure on University Hospital Geelong's emergency department, delivering inpatient acute mental health services and community-based care in a contemporary, safe and high-quality hospital setting.

Geelong-based Lyons Construction has also begun work on the \$16 million Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Services Community Hub in central Geelong, with construction on track to be completed in late 2022.

Operated by Barwon Health, the five-storey hub will provide better access to treatment and support services for people experiencing mental ill-health and addiction – further supporting them on their recovery journey.

The hub will consolidate existing services onto one contemporary, fit-for-purpose site. Clinicians will provide telephone, online, walk-in, at-home and outreach services over extended operating hours – and the facility will also include space clinicians and researchers to collaborate to improve mental health outcomes across the region.

The Labor Government invested \$3.8 billion in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* to transform Victoria's mental health system, in the single largest investment in mental health by any state government.

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"We know the system isn't keeping up with demand. That's why we are going to implement every single recommendation from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System – because lives depend on it."

Quote attributable to Member for Lara John Eren

"When complete, more residents and their families in this region are going to be able to access the mental health treatment and support they need – close to home."

Quote attributable to Member for Geelong Christine Couzens

"Integrated mental health treatment and support services will make a real difference in the Geelong region to help respond to the growing needs of the community – and we are proud to be getting it done."

Quote attributable to Member for South Barwon Darren Cheeseman

"These important local mental health services will ensure members of our community experiencing mental ill-health have access to the support and care they need, close to home in the Greater Geelong region."

Quote attributable to Acting Member for Bellarine Gayle Tierney

"These significant infrastructure projects are expected to create and sustain hundreds of local jobs, providing a boost to the local economy as we continue to recover from the coronavirus pandemic."

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