

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health



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## MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT, CLOSE TO HOME

As the serious Delta outbreak continues across the state, the Victorian Government is making sure more Victorians struggling during this difficult period have access to the mental health and wellbeing support they need.

On top of the \$225 million the Government has already provided to support Victorians' mental health throughout the pandemic, a further investment of \$22 million will deliver fast-tracked, tailored care to those who need it, reducing the burden on emergency departments as the number of coronavirus patients grows.

This pandemic has shown us all the important role our local communities play – and this new package will establish local, accessible services to support the mental health and wellbeing of thousands of Victorians, close to home.

An investment of \$13.3 million will deliver 20 pop-up community mental health services – with around 90 dedicated clinicians providing 93,000 additional hours of wellbeing checks and counselling to many thousands of Victorians needing support.

The pop-up centres, to be delivered by trusted community health providers like Mind, cohealth and EACH, will open progressively from the end of September across Melbourne and regional Victoria, with a dedicated triage and referral hotline and website to be established in the coming days so people can start booking appointments.

This investment in the wellbeing of every Victorian also includes dedicated support for specific groups who may be at higher risk of isolation or mental health concerns as a result of the pandemic.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will also receive additional support with \$4 million for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency to self-determine the best, most culturally appropriate response to the mental health and wellbeing needs of their local communities.

An investment of \$1 million will expand the Triple P parenting programs, supporting more than 20,000 Victorian families whose children are experiencing anxiety, while \$1.2 million will boost the capacity of peak LGBTIQ+ community organisations including Switchboard, Thorne Harbour Health and Drummond Street Family Services.

A further \$1 million will support the mental health workforce to better respond to patients presenting with trauma, and \$1.5 million will allow the Royal Children's Hospital, Vichealth and key partners to better support the most vulnerable groups of children and young people, both now and into the future.

Alongside this extra support, an investment of more than \$300 million from the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* has started rolling out this week to deliver 14 critical new Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health Services – a key recommendation from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

This year alone, this unprecedented investment will support an extra 1,149 infants, children and young people as well as their families with the tailored support they need – expanding our youth services' capacity by 14 per cent.

Based in hospitals across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria, the services provide specialist care for high-risk cases and help with early intervention treatment for children and young people experiencing mild and moderate mental health concerns.

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

*“We’re not wasting a moment delivering the huge reforms the Royal Commission recommended for our state’s mental health services – but we know the pandemic has increased immediate demand, so we’re investing to make sure more Victorians have access to the support they need right now.”*

*“Our local communities have been so vital in supporting us over the past 18 months – and these innovative local pop-up mental health services will deliver the support people need, close to home.”*