

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Tuesday, 21 December 2021

SPECIALIST MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR VICTORIAN WOMEN

The Andrews Labor Government will provide better and safer mental health treatment for Victorian women, under a new nation-leading partnership that delivers on a key recommendation of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*.

An investment of more than \$100 million will deliver the Australian-first Specialist Women's Mental Health Service – with 35 acute mental health beds in Melbourne and Shepparton to support women with a range of complex conditions.

This service will provide care for those who have experienced trauma and sexual abuse, women presenting with eating disorders, women experiencing perinatal mental health concerns and women who identify as LGBTIQ+, in partnership with Alfred Health, Ramsay Health Care and Goulburn Valley Health.

The Royal Commission recommended that 35 acute beds be created for public patients in a private setting, easing pressure on the public system and ensuring women get the care and support they need, as soon as they need it.

The beds will be established at Ramsay Health Care's facilities, with 30 beds at Albert Road Clinic in Melbourne and five beds at Shepparton Private Hospital – with an evaluation of the success of this 'hub and spoke' model to inform potential future sites across other regional locations.

The Royal Commission heard from many women who described experiences of gender-based harm or abuse in the mental health system – and this unique response model will ensure gender and sexual safety for women in acute inpatient settings, helping them to recover in a setting appropriate to their level of need.

The Specialist Women's Mental Health Service will also provide ongoing consultation and support to build the capacity of local mental health services across the state, helping all health services deliver world class, trauma-informed care for Victorian women who are experiencing acute mental health conditions.

The proposed model of care has been co-designed in consultation with women with lived experience of all sides of the mental health system.

In addition to these 35 women's beds, the Labor Government's work to deliver an extra 144 new general acute mental health beds across the state is well underway, investing \$492 million to support Victorians when they need it most.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier and Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"People should feel safe when they seek mental health care – that's the bottom line. We're making sure it happens with this Australian-first facility, delivering specialist care for women who need acute support."

"Many Victorian women told us through the Royal Commission their experiences within the system haven't supported their recovery effectively – and we've worked with many of those women to design services that will meet their needs."