

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP

Deputy Premier

Minister for Education

Minister for Mental Health



Tuesday, 17 May 2022

ABORIGINAL VICTORIANS TO LEAD MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS

A new mental health hub will give Aboriginal groups leadership to redesign how care is delivered to their communities across the state, as part of the Andrews Labor Government's landmark reform agenda, transforming the way the mental health of Victorians is supported.

Minister for Mental Health James Merlino today launched the new Balit Durn Durn Centre in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

The Balit Durn Durn Centre will work in collaboration with health services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to undertake research, provide workforce training and development, and share best practice in delivering culturally appropriate and tailored support.

Mental healthcare is best driven from within communities that know their needs best – that's why the Labor Government is supporting Victorian Aboriginal communities to develop their own informed care pathways that are informed by their connection to language, lore and cultural knowledge.

The Centre will support the establishment and expansion of a highly skilled and professionally qualified workforce to meet growing demand for more Aboriginal clinical and therapeutic workers - delivering at least 30 multidisciplinary scholarships through RMIT and Deakin Universities by 2025.

Thirteen scholarships have already been awarded so far in 2022, showing strong interest in the program and a strong desire for Aboriginal Victorians to work in community providing culturally informed and sensitive care.

The new centre delivers on a key recommendation of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* which called for community leaders, organisations, people, families and carers to have their voices and experiences included in a redesign of the mental health system.

The Labor Government's record investments in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* and *2022/23* have delivered more than \$119.5 million to support new models of Aboriginal-led and culturally safe care, so all Aboriginal communities can access the support they need, when they need it – no matter where they live.

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"Aboriginal Victorians deserve to have a say in how their communities are cared for – and we're putting community front and centre in redesigning our state's mental health system."

Quote attributable to Acting Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ros Spence

"We have an enormous reform agenda ahead of us and a strong commitment to making Aboriginal self-determination a reality so all Aboriginal people, their families and communities get the support they need to heal and live well."