

Media Release

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



Tuesday, 7 June 2022

OPENING THE FRONT DOOR TO MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

The Andrews Labor Government is building a mental health system that works for all Victorians – helping people get the care they need immediately, in their own communities.

The Minister for Mental Health James Merlino today announced that 30 Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs, opened in late 2021 in communities across Victoria, will continue to provide care until *Mental Health Locals* open across the state.

Building Victoria's mental health system from the ground up won't happen overnight. It's a reform that will take years to deliver – but the Labor Government has stepped in to make sure there is support available for Victorians who need it, as soon as they need it, while the work to build the system is underway.

The Hubs were opened in October 2021 to support Victorians through the challenges of the pandemic – will continue until the service is expanded permanently. The Hubs have been extraordinarily successful, providing care to more than 1,600 people across the state in just the first seven months.

The Hubs act as a 'front door' service to the mental health system, providing support without any eligibility criteria or the need for a GP referral, removing the barriers that too many Victorians face when they need support.

In the coming months, this new approach to community care will be made permanent – delivering on the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System's recommendation that more than 50 local services are established to give Victorians easy access to care without having to navigate the system while they're in crisis.

Building on the success of the Hubs, the first six of these *Mental Health Locals* will open this year to become an easy entry point to getting care with welcoming, inclusive and comfortable drop-in spaces, staffed by qualified mental health professionals, that meet the diverse needs of communities around the state.

These services will provide care and support for adults who are experiencing mild to moderate mental health challenges – including people with co-occurring alcohol and drug addiction treatment and care needs.

The first three new Local Services will open in the coming months in Benalla/Wangaratta/Mansfield, Latrobe City and Frankston, with the next three to open by the end of 2022 in Brimbank, Geelong/Queenscliff, and Whittlesea.

The Labor Government will also open three new dedicated mental health hubs for children this year – which will start delivering tailored care to families struggling with mental health concerns in the Southern Melbourne, Brimbank-Melton, and Loddon areas in the coming months.

The *Victorian Budget 2022/23* delivered more than \$1.3 billion to continue the Labor Government's work to rebuild the mental health system – building on last year's record investment of \$3.8 billion and ensuring work is underway on implementing more than 90 per cent of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"The Royal Commission told us that too many Victorians find navigating the mental health system too hard – we're removing barriers to getting that care, with services in communities across the state to provide care to everyone."

"Victorians across the state are getting the help they need through the Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs – that's why we're keeping them open until mid-2023 while we get on and deliver permanent Local Services."

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