

Monday, 11 July 2022

MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL SCHOOLS

The Andrews Labor Government is helping regional Victorian students access a suite of mental health tools to help them thrive in school and life.

Kangaroo Flat Primary School in Bendigo will be one of the first schools to receive funding under the Labor Government's \$200 million Schools Mental Health program, to implement a range of tailored mental health supports for students.

The program delivers a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Mental Health - to support social and emotional wellbeing in schools - and is underpinned by an online evidence-based menu enabling schools to select the mental health tools that best match the needs of each student.

From today, the program will start rolling out to all government schools across regional Victoria with a full roll out by 2024 to all state schools.

A framework was provided to schools in 2021, for them to be able to start planning and selecting programs across three tiers of intervention.

Tier one will provide positive mental health promotion, including initiatives such as mental health first aid, anti-bullying programs and therapy dogs that help create positive and inclusive environments across the school.

The second tier will support early intervention and specialised initiatives such as cross-cultural responsiveness training, arts therapy or trauma informed care and the third tier is targeted at individualised support such as additional mental health professionals for those experiencing mental health issues.

In addition, the *Victorian Budget 2022/23* is investing \$41.3 million to sustain mental health services for schools, including continuation of the LOOKOUT program and headspace initiative.

The Labor Government will also continue the Mental Health Practitioners initiative, ensuring students can access mental health support at all Victorian government secondary and specialist schools.

The Government is also expanding the Mental Health in Primary Schools program to all government and low-fee non-government primary schools enabling schools to employ a Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader and implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

"The Schools Mental Health Fund will help ensure young people to have access to the right tools to support their mental health."

"By investing in initiatives that put students' health and wellbeing at the forefront with targeted support we will help them reach their potential."

Quote attributable to the Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards

"I have seen how Kangaroo Flat Primary School has supported its students mental health and know that along with other schools in and around Bendigo they will be able to take advantage of the early rollout of this program in regional Victoria."