

# Joint Media Release



**The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Ambulance Services  
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples



**Australian Government**  
**The Hon Emma McBride MP**  
Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide  
Prevention  
Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health

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## EARLY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VICTORIANS

The Albanese Labor Government and Andrews Labor Government are working together to deliver a groundbreaking new support program for Victorian adults experiencing psychological distress.

A recommendation from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, the Distress Brief Support Trial is set to be rolled out in Greater Shepparton and the City of Darebin.

Specifically tailored for people who do not require emergency, hospital-based care, the trial will be critical in breaking down systemic barriers preventing practical support that deescalates distress before it reaches crisis point.

Planning will get underway in coming months with mental health experts looking to Scotland's successful 14-day Distress Brief intervention program to model Victoria's trial – placing a focus on identifying services that will help establish long term resolutions for each individual.

In an evaluation of the Scottish trial, published in May 2022, the country's Director-General Health and Social Care concluded that the program had "been successful in offering support to those in distress and has contributed to peoples' ability to manage and reduce their distress in the short term, and for some in the longer term."

Running from 2016 to 2019, the Scottish pilot focused on a compassionate response to individuals in distress, giving them the opportunity to be referred to a 14-day program.

Staff in this program were specifically trained to provide empathetic care that was community based and problem-solving, rather than a clinical intervention – this included personalised distress management action plans.

In Victoria, it is hoped the specially designed program can become a viable option for adults who could benefit from non-clinical support as an alternative to presenting for emergency, hospital-based care, and helping reduce demand on the health system.

The trial is a jointly funded initiative, with the Albanese Labor Government contributing \$2.4 million and the Andrews Labor Government contributing \$2.6 million.

### Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams

*"While clinical intervention can be lifechanging for some, it is not suitable to everyone. That is why this trial will play a significant role in understanding how we can deescalate and manage distress in a less confronting setting."*

*"Every Victorian deserves the best care especially at their most vulnerable – the Royal Commission has given us the chance to do better when it comes to removing barriers to help people access the right support."*

### Quotes attributable to Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Emma McBride

*"Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Victorians is a top priority for the Albanese Labor Government – we know there are often barriers to entry for people in distress to access the care they need."*

*"Offering compassionate and timely support based on referrals from other services is an effective way to help people develop the skills to manage distress."*

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