

Media Release

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



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CARING FOR THE CARERS OF VULNERABLE VICTORIANS

More than 60,000 Victorians care for a loved one living with mental illness, and the Andrews Labor Government is giving them the support they need – with new Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres in seven regions now officially open.

Delivering on a key recommendation of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*, these services are the first of their kind in Australia, supporting the mental health and quality of life of caregivers when supporting someone with mental health challenges, illness, psychological distress or addiction.

Recognising these Victorians are often unable to work and without adequate support, the centres offer a welcoming and accessible space, available without need for a referral – giving those with care responsibilities access to a range of services, including information, networks, resources and hardship funds.

Made possible by a more than \$54 million investment by the Labor Government, the initiative sees central hubs and additional satellite sites now open across regional and metro Victoria, including locations in:

- **Loddon Mallee** – Bendigo (hub), Mildura (hub), Swan Hill (satellite)
- **Gippsland** – Traralgon (hub), Bairnsdale (hub), Wonthaggi (satellite – in progress)
- **Hume** – Wangaratta (hub), Wodonga (satellite), Shepparton (satellite)
- **South West** – Geelong (hub), Warrnambool (hub)
- **North East metro** – Ivanhoe (hub), Hawthorn (satellite), Lilydale (satellite)
- **South East metro** – South Melbourne (satellite), Bentleigh (satellite – opening in September), Dandenong (satellite – opening to be confirmed)
- **Western Metro** – Sunshine (hub)

Grampians will also receive a hub with an announcement in June that MIND has been appointed as the lead provider and will partner with Grampians Community Health and Ballarat Community Health – satellite sites will also be established. An opening date will be set in coming months.

Backed by a workforce of more than 140 people offering lived experience in supporting people with mental health or addiction-related illness, the centres were also co-designed with families, carers and supporters.

Each hub and satellite location will also provide outreach, phone and online services to meet the diverse needs of the community.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres are part a \$93 million investment to support families and carers – bringing the Labor Government's overall investment in the mental health and wellbeing system to more than \$6 billion since the Royal Commission report was handed down.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Gabrielle Williams

"We are so often focused on supporting those living with mental illness that we forget to check on the people caring for them – caregiving can be a challenging job, so it is vital we make sure carers are well supported."

"These centres play an important role in not only promoting a better quality of life for caregivers, but also offering practical services, including advice, connection to support networks and access to hardship funds."

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