

Joint Media Release



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NEW SERVICES TO BOOST CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Victorian kids will get the mental health support they need, at no cost – with three new hubs now open to support children and families when they need it most.

Victorian Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt and Federal Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Emma McBride today officially opened the three new Children's Health and Wellbeing Locals – forming part of the national network of Head to Health Kids services being delivered across Australia.

Delivered by both the Allan and Albanese Labor Governments – the new services are located in Sunshine, Bendigo and Cranbourne – providing specialist support for children aged 0-11 years and their families, free of charge and with no referral required.

Delivering on key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy – the Locals respond to the need for a renewed focus on early intervention and age-appropriate care to meet development and mental health challenges in younger children.

Support includes specialist medical and allied health services for children who are experiencing developmental, behavioural and emotional challenges, including paediatricians, psychologists, and speech pathologists all under one roof.

Focused on strengthening support for parents, the Locals will also deliver family services, group parenting programs and culturally safe wrap around services.

Designed in consultation with local communities, people with lived experience as well as local service providers, including Aboriginal Controlled Community Organisations, the service offerings are tailored to local needs and build on existing services and capacity.

It is estimated that approximately 400 children and their families will utilise each of the three services each year as the services scale up.

The Sunshine Local is operated by IPC Health, while the Bendigo service is led by Bendigo Community Health and the Cranbourne service by Monash Health.

In a partnership formalised through the Bilateral Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Victorian and Australian Governments agreed to co-fund the three hubs to improve multidisciplinary care for infants, children and families.

The Commonwealth has provided \$22.3 million in funding to support the establishment and operation of the Victorian hubs – part of what will be a national network of Head to Health Kids Hubs.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/2022* provided more than \$41 million over four years and \$13 million ongoing to establish and deliver the three Child Locals.

Since the Victorian Royal Commission handed down its final report, the Victorian Government has made significant progress, with work underway to implement more than 90 per cent of recommendations and more than \$6 billion invested in the system over the past three years – the largest investment in mental health in the state's history.

Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

“For too long families have struggled to access age-appropriate mental health and wellbeing services – these new Locals will ensure more children are given the support they need to help them thrive.”

“Backing our youngest Victorians is critical, but so is supporting their parents – we know how tough it can be to juggle everyday life, especially when a child is struggling, which is why this under-one-roof model is so important.”

“We have made record investments in our mental health system, ensuring Victorians get the care they need and deserve – this partnership with the Commonwealth further bolsters our continued work to rebuild our system.”

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

“It is crucial governments work together to support children and their families to access wellbeing and mental health support.

“Head to Health Kids Hubs fill a gap for families and young children with mental health and wellbeing challenges.

“Head to Health Kids Hubs offer highly trained and multidisciplinary teams; all working together to support children aged 0-11 years and their families.

“These three hubs are the first of 16 to be delivered under the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement and I look forward to working with other jurisdictions as we get more services open and supporting local communities.”

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