

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



Friday, 15 March 2024

WALK-IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT NOW AVAILABLE IN WHITTLESEA

The Allan Labor Government is getting on with the job of building a modern and accessible mental health system for every Victorian - with the start of walk-ins at the Whittlesea Mental Health and Wellbeing Local.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today visited the service's permanent location in South Morang with Member for Mill Park, Lily D'Ambrosio, and member for Yan Yean, Lauren Kathage to announce that locals aged 26 years and older can now walk in and get the help they need – it is free and no GP referral or appointment is required.

Offering telehealth since October 2022, provider Neami – alongside partners Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Drummond Street Services and Uniting Vic Tas scaled up services last year.

The Whittlesea service is one of 15 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (Locals) operating across the state, supporting people experiencing mental illness or psychological distress, including those with co-occurring substance use or addiction concerns, providing treatment and care in their community and closer to their support networks.

A flagship reform following the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System*, Locals act as a 'front door' to the mental health system, offering a welcoming and inclusive space to access support from qualified mental health professionals, including peer support workers catering to the diverse needs of all communities.

The *Victorian Budget 2021/22* delivered more than \$263 million to establish the first 27 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, with the latest budget funding \$67 million to establish additional services and \$10 million towards planning for another 20 locations.

Since the Royal Commission handed down its final report, significant progress has been made 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 Victoria's history.

People in Whittlesea and surrounding communities can now access the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local at 7/1 Danaher Drive, South Morang seven days a week, or can call to arrange a face-to-face or telehealth appointment.

Further information about Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals can be found at betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mhwlocal.

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"Services like the Whittlesea Local are helping transform our mental health system and are the perfect 'front door' to getting more Victorians the help they need."

Quote attributable to Member for Mill Park Lily D'Ambrosio

"This new Local service in South Morang will provide much needed mental health support for people across our community in a welcoming and accessible environment."

Quote attributable to Member for Yan Yean Lauren Kathage

"With walk ins now available, locals who are seeking care can access critically important face-to-face mental health support – and with no GP referral or fees it means anyone can walk in and ask for help."

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