

# Media Release

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



Friday, 9 August 2024

## STRENGTHENING VITAL SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Allan Labor Government continues to establish support networks across the state to help Victorians combat loneliness by building connections in their local communities and improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced that five more *Social Inclusion Action Groups (SIAGs)* will be established in Brimbank, Greater Geelong, Whittlesea, Mildura and Ballarat.

The groups will see community members and leaders across local government areas working together to deliver initiatives and activities that combat loneliness and isolation by boosting social inclusion and connection, developed by locals who know their communities best.

They will be made up of a diverse range of community members and local leaders of all ages and backgrounds, including people with lived experience, Aboriginal people and those from LGBTIQ+, disability and culturally diverse communities.

*The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* recognised that communities are best placed to understand and drive local social connection and inclusion that supports mental health and wellbeing and recommended establishing 'community collectives' to support mental health and wellbeing across Victoria.

In response to the Royal Commission's recommendation, the Labor Government has invested \$9.1 million over four years to establish the first 10 Social Inclusion Action Groups, with five already established in Benalla, Frankston, Latrobe and Mansfield and Wangaratta.

The Social Inclusion Action Groups will complement the social prescribing initiative *Local Connections* - aiming to connect people with activities in their local community to reduce loneliness and social isolation which is being trialled through our new Mental Health and Wellbeing Local services in Benalla, Wangaratta, Mansfield, Geelong, Brimbank, Frankston, Latrobe and Whittlesea.

Each Social Inclusion Action Group is supported by a Local Social Inclusion Investment Fund, which is to be directed towards community-led initiatives that prevent social exclusion and support community participation, inclusion and connection.

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.

For further information on Social Inclusion Action Groups, visit [health.vic.gov.au/social-inclusion-action-groups](https://health.vic.gov.au/social-inclusion-action-groups).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

*"Evidence shows that our communities are best placed to understand and drive local social connection and inclusion that promotes good mental health and wellbeing."*

*"We all know that prevention is better than cure, that's why we are helping to strengthen the wellbeing of Victorians in their local communities through Social Inclusion Action Groups."*

**Media contact:** Max Resic 0435 256 250 | [max.resic@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:max.resic@minstaff.vic.gov.au)