

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Ageing

Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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NEW WANGARATTA MENTAL HEALTH LOCAL SITE OPENS ITS DOORS

The Allan Labor Government is making access to free, community-based mental health care even easier with the official opening of the permanent home for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Wangaratta.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt and Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes today celebrated the opening of the new Wangaratta Local site – developed with community members and people with lived and living experience.

The Wangaratta Local offers a range of clinical and wellbeing mental health supports via in-person walk-ins and appointments, telehealth and outreach services – all free of charge, with no Medicare card or GP referral required.

Acting as a ‘front door’ to the mental health system, Victoria’s network of Locals provide support and treatment for adults experiencing mental illness or psychological distress, including co-occurring substance use or addiction.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Wangaratta is led by Wellways Australia in partnership with Albury Wodonga Health and the Australian Community Support Organisation.

Services are delivered by a multidisciplinary team of experienced mental health professionals, wellbeing staff and peer support workers, and is designed to meet the diverse needs of the community.

A flagship reform following the *Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System*, the Wangaratta Local has been operating in a temporary location since October 2021.

It is one of 15 existing Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals that have already supported more than 23,000 Victorians with free community-based mental health care.

The *Victorian Budget 2025/26* invested \$34.4 million to expand and continue our network of Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, including establishing a further seven Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals across the state.

The Wangaratta community can now access the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local located at 76a Reid Street on weekdays between 9:00am – 6:00pm and Saturdays by appointment.

For more information on Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mhwlocal.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

“Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals are making it simpler for Victorians to access free, walk-in support whenever they need it – with no referrals or Medicare card needed, just care that’s close to home.”

“We’re continuing to build a mental health system that works for every Victorian no matter where they live – with a specific focus on prevention and early intervention, especially in our regional and rural communities.”

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Region Jaclyn Symes

“Having a Mental Health and Wellbeing Local site right here in Wangaratta means the community can access the mental health support they need without worrying about how much it might cost or how far they need to travel.”