

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Ageing

Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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## NEW PEER-LED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE – A VICTORIAN FIRST

The Allan Labor Government is transforming mental health care in Victoria by announcing the state's first peer-led residential service in Moolap – offering Victorians in crisis a safe and supportive alternative to hospital care.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced the new Lived Experience Residential Service – a community-based program designed and led by people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges.

Backed by a \$7 million investment, the service has been carefully designed so every stage – from planning to delivery – meets the needs of Victorians at their most vulnerable.

The service will provide Victorians with a safe alternative when hospital admission isn't needed, adding an extra layer of support to the mental health system and ensuring care is tailored to individual needs.

Designed to be safe, welcoming and recovery-focused, the Lived Experience Residential Service will allow Victorians over 18 to access support in a non-medical, home-like setting for up to three weeks, where each day is shaped by the individual – cooking meals, joining group conversations, or going for a walk with lived experience peer workers.

Beyond immediate support, the staff will connect people to clinical or community services if needed, and ensure support continues beyond the immediate crisis, offering a genuine alternative to hospital care.

The trial will offer accommodation and support with 8 beds – with the first four beds to open early next year and the remaining four by mid-2026.

This innovative new model is a direct response to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System Interim Report, which recommended establishing a residential service designed and delivered by people with lived experience.

First Nations perspectives have been actively involved in the design and development of the service, with dedicated staff and training to support cultural safety for First Nations consumers.

By providing an alternative to acute inpatient admission, the service will reduce pressure on hospitals and strengthen the mental health system's ability to respond to people with compassion, connection and choice.

The service will be operated by Mind Australia and was codesigned in partnership with Alfred Mental and Addiction Health.

An evaluation will be undertaken once the service is fully operational to inform future peer-led residential mental health services in Victoria.

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

*"Victoria's first peer-led residential mental health service will be life-changing – offering a safe, home-like environment where people in distress are supported by peers who truly understand what they're going through."*

*"This new model of care is about choice, compassion and connection – giving Victorians a genuine alternative to hospital, designed and delivered by people with lived experience, and centred on recovery, dignity and hope."*

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**Quote attributable to Mind Australia CEO Gill Callister**

*“Mind Australia is proud to lead the establishment of the first Lived Experience Residential Service in Victoria as this service will provide the opportunity to forge new ground in the delivery of lived experience-led services.”*

**Quote attributable to Mind Australia Executive Director Lived Experience Katie Larsen**

*“Victoria’s first Lived Experience Residential Service will deliver support to people experiencing mental health crisis and distress through a transformative approach that centres connection, compassion and healing.”*

**Quote attributable to Member for Geelong Christine Couzens**

*“This new peer-led service is a huge win for our community – giving people in Geelong and across the region access to vital mental health support close to home, in a safe and welcoming environment.”*