

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Ageing

Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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MENTAL HEALTH LOCAL OPENS ITS DOORS IN EAST GIPPSLAND

The Allan Labor Government is making it easier for Victorians to get free, community-based mental health care, with the official opening of the permanent site for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Bairnsdale.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today visited and celebrated the opening of the new Bairnsdale Local site – developed with community members and people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health.

The Local will support the East Gippsland community with a range of clinical and wellbeing mental health supports via in-person appointments, walk-ins, 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.

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

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Bairnsdale is led by Wellways Australia in partnership with Gippsland Lakes Complete Health and Latrobe Regional Health.

A flagship reform of the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, the Locals have already supported almost 28,000 Victorians to access free, community-based care.

Building on the existing Locals, the Labor Government recently announced seven new Locals will soon open across the state, bringing the total number of Locals to 22 across 24 locations.

The Victorian Budget 2025/26 invested \$34.4 million over two years to support the 17 existing locations, establish these seven new locations and continue community-based mental health care across Victoria.

People across the East Gippsland area can now access the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local located at 24 Service Street, Bairnsdale on weekdays from 9:00am to 5:00pm and on weekday public holidays from 10:00am to 2:00pm, with extended hours to come.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

“Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals are making it simpler for Victorians to access free mental health support when they need it – with no referrals or Medicare card needed.”

“Close to 28,000 Victorians have already turned to Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals for support – and with more Locals on the way, even more Victorians will have access to this vital service close to home.”

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

“This service means people in the East Gippsland can get the help they need locally, without having to travel far or face barriers to care.”

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