

Sunday, 13 September

## HeadtoHelp providing COVID-19 mental health support



People in the north, west and centre of Melbourne will be able to access more support for the mental health impacts of COVID-19 at three new *HeadtoHelp* mental health hubs at Wyndham Vale, Broadmeadows and Brunswick East.

The three new mental health hubs are part of a network of 15 hubs being set up around Victoria as part of the Commonwealth Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

People will access HeadtoHelp by calling the intake, advice and referral line on 1800 595 212. Trained mental health professionals will then assess their needs and connect them with the most appropriate local services, including the new mental health hubs as well as existing services.

North Western Melbourne PHN CEO Christopher Carter said the advice line and the hubs themselves would be available to anyone in the community with or without a GP mental health treatment plan.

"Mental health issues don't discriminate," Adjunct Associate Professor Carter said. "Many people in north, west and central Melbourne may have never experienced mental ill-health before and are facing new challenges due to COVID-19.

"*HeadtoHelp* will provide a welcoming place for everyone who needs mental health and wellbeing support, whether their mental health issues are pre-existing or have emerged during the pandemic."

North Western Melbourne PHN has worked closely with primary health care services, hospitals, the Victorian Mental Health Pandemic Response Taskforce and the Victorian and Commonwealth

Governments to identify the locations and providers for the hubs. Decisions were guided by which areas have the greatest need and finding providers with the systems and workforce to begin operating rapidly while meeting COVIDSafe operational and governance requirements.

In addition to the \$26.9 million to fund the hubs for 12 months, the Commonwealth Government has also invested a further \$5 million to enhance existing digital and phone services for specific groups that are experiencing significant challenges during the restrictions in Victoria.

These services providers include The Butterfly Foundation, Eating Disorders Families Australia, Q-Life, Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia, and the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Yarning SafeNStrong helpline.

“We continue to demonstrate our firm commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians, with estimated annual federal expenditure on mental health services and suicide prevention estimated to be a record of \$5.7 billion in 2020-21 alone,” Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt said.

A/Prof Carter said Victoria’s Primary Health Networks are taking a staged approach to setting up the hubs which will be operational from Monday 14 September 2020, initially from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

“We have quickly mobilised to set up the hubs and a new statewide 1800 phone number so people throughout our region and Victoria can access the services they need.

“We will work alongside health professionals and others in the community to continue growing the resources and services available to people during this difficult time and beyond.”

*HeadtoHelp* will link in with existing Victorian and Commonwealth funded mental health support services, helping to guide people seeking help to the support that best meets their individual situation.

To contact HeadtoHelp, call 1800 595 212 between 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday or visit [headtohelp.org.au](http://headtohelp.org.au)

**Note: This is not a crisis service.**

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## ABOUT PHNs

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, PHNs began operation on 1 July 2015 and are responsible for coordinating primary health care and facilitating improved health outcomes in their local community. Melbourne Primary Care Network operates the North Western Melbourne PHN.

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We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



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