



## **The Hon David Coleman MP**

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

25 May 2021

### **New mental health support for Tasmanians**

#### **Joint statement from the Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Primary Health Tasmania**

Tasmanians experiencing mild mental illness will have easier access to the support they need, when and where they need it, through new telephone and online services funded by the Morrison Government.

Remedy Healthcare, commissioned by Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN), will start delivery of its MindStep<sup>®</sup> and Healing Minds services in Tasmania from today.

The free services will be for adults with or at risk of mild mental illness, wherever they live in Tasmania. This includes people with anxiety and depression, people experiencing isolation, those in rural and remote locations, and people affected by pandemic-related isolation and natural disasters such as bushfires and floods.

The services will reduce psychological distress and improve quality of life by helping people to self-manage their mental health and wellbeing. People will be able to contact the services directly, or be referred by GPs, allied health professionals and other health and community services.

The services involve one-on-one assessment, coaching and follow-up sessions, with the MindStep telephone service running over six months for each patient and the MindStep online service lasting up to three months.

The Healing Minds telephone service, a culturally sensitive adaptation of MindStep specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults, also runs for six months.

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, David Coleman, said the Government had made mental health and suicide prevention a national priority.

“The COVID-19 pandemic and other natural disasters such as bushfires and floods have emphasised the importance of flexible and scalable mental health support to ensure people get the right level of care, when and where they need it,” Assistant Minister Coleman said.

“These new services will play an integral part in delivering that care to Tasmanians, regardless of where they live across the state.”

Primary Health Tasmania spokesman Grant Akesson said before the COVID-19 pandemic, an estimated 14% of Tasmanian adults self-reported high or very high levels of psychological distress.

“We know the pandemic has led to even more Tasmanians seeking professional help for these problems,” he said.

“These new services increase the support options available to Tasmanians experiencing mild mental illness, especially people who find it difficult to travel to face-to-face appointments.”

The MindStep and Healing Minds services – developed in partnership with Flinders University – use cognitive behavioural therapy to complement the care people receive from their GP, psychologist or psychiatrist.

Delivered by trained mental health coaches, the confidential services use evidence-based techniques that improve mental health and wellbeing.

Flinders University research shows 55% of people enrolled in MindStep recovered from their mental health condition and 76% saw a clinically significant improvement in symptoms.

The new services will operate alongside group-based mental health and wellbeing services delivered by Mindfulness Programs Australasia. Collectively, these services will receive \$720,000 a year in Australian Government funding.

Under the Australian Government’s Primary Health Networks program, Primary Health Tasmania commissions a number of organisations to deliver community-based mental health services for young people and adults around Tasmania. These services are across the continuum of care, from early intervention to services for people with complex and severe mental illness.

The commencement of these new services follows the announcement in the Federal Budget last week of a record \$2.3 billion investment in Australia’s mental health and suicide prevention system – the single largest investment in mental health and suicide prevention in Australia’s history.

To contact MindStep call 1800 322 278 or <https://www.remedyhealthcare.com.au/mindstep>. To contact Healing Minds call 1800 810 255.