

# Media release

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## Launceston a step closer to Head to Health centre opening

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**Experienced mental health service provider Stride has been unveiled as the lead agency to run an innovative new mental health centre for adults living in the Launceston area.**

Launceston Head to Health will aim to improve access to mental health and related support services for adults in distress or crisis, as well as family and friends needing information and advice.

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) is overseeing the establishment of Launceston Head to Health under the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks program, and selected Stride to operate the centre following an open tender process.

Federal Member for Bass Bridget Archer has welcomed the news as an important step forward in helping northern Tasmanians who are experiencing mental ill-health – and the loved ones and carers who support them.

"I have long been committed to addressing the challenges faced by many in our community who are looking to urgently access mental health services that are suitable to their own individual needs," Mrs Archer says.

"The centre will be a valuable addition to the local service landscape, connecting people with existing services and providing urgent short and medium-term care where needed."

The Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, says the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain it have had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of many Australians.

"This is why the Government continues to make mental health support a national priority," he says.

"The Launceston Head to Health centre will be among the first in a network of community mental health centres that will ensure all Australians have access to high quality person-centred care. This network is being expanded by 32 sites through a further \$487.2 million investment that formed part of the record \$2.3 billion National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan announced in the 2021–22 Budget.

"I'm delighted that this service will be open soon for the people of Launceston and will help support and guide the creation of new services across the country.

"The Australian Government is committed to working towards zero suicides and transforming the mental health system to ensure all Australians can access the right care and essential services whenever and wherever they need."

Primary Health Tasmania spokesman Mark Broxton says the Head to Health model of delivering services in the community, with no charge and without the need for an appointment, referral or prior diagnosis, is a positive step forward.

"Around one in five people in our community will experience mental health problems in any year, with an estimated 14,860 Tasmanians living with a severe mental health disorder," he says.

“It’s often unclear to people and their families and friends which services they should access for mental health problems.

“Launceston Head to Health will be a ‘no wrong door’ entry point to a range of services.”

Stride spokesperson Nicci Dickson says the organisation has a strong track record in the delivery of community-based and integrated mental health services in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

Stride pioneered the adult integrated services in Australia with the Floresco model in 2014. Since then, the organisation has established five integrated adult hubs and one children’s centre, as well as operating seven headspace centres.

“We’re really excited about working with the existing local service providers to improve access to mental health services for people in the Launceston area,” she says.

“In the next month we will focus on the initial services that will commence in December, and will be recruiting a range of staff – including peer workers with lived experience of mental health.”

There has been extensive community consultation to develop a locally owned ‘philosophy of care’ – a framework outlining the goals and values to underpin the services provided through the centre.

Launceston Head to Health is scheduled to commence delivery of initial services from an interim site on the corner of Paterson and Wellington streets in December. There are plans for a new purpose-built site to open in Canning Street in mid-2022.

Services delivered from the interim site will be transitioned to the permanent site, at which time the full suite of services will be offered.

The four in-house services outlined in the Australian Department of Health’s service model for Head to Health centres focus on:

- responding to people experiencing a crisis or in significant distress
- providing a central point to connect people to other services in the region
- providing in-house assessment, including information and support to access services
- evidence-based and evidence-informed immediate care, and short to medium episodes of care.

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation working to connect care and keep Tasmanians well and out of hospital. It was established under the Australian Government’s Primary Health Networks Program to support and enable a coordinated, primary care-focused health system.

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