

## Media release

Thursday 20 January 2022

### Launceston Head to Health opens its doors

Adults in the Launceston area will have better access to mental health support from Monday 24 January with the opening of the innovative new Launceston Head to Health centre.

The new adult mental health service will be a 'no wrong door' entry point for people who need:

- immediate mental health support
- support to navigate to other suitable mental health services in the local community
- information and advice for family and friends of people experiencing mental illness.

Federal Member for Bass Bridget Archer welcomed the opening of the new service, which is one of eight initial Head to Health centres funded by the Australian Government – one in each state and territory.

"After fighting to ensure our region would see Head to Health established right here in Launceston, I'm thrilled to see this innovative new service open its doors," she said.

"I congratulate everyone who has contributed to Launceston Head to Health already, and sincerely hope adults in the community who may be in need of support, especially at a time like the one we're all living through, take up the opportunity to seek out this welcoming, accessible service."

Nicci Dickson, spokesperson for Stride, the organisation that will operate the service, said Launceston Head to Health would be a powerful complement to services already provided in the community by connecting people with the best options for their ongoing care.

"We know that people who are experiencing stress or other challenges benefit hugely from being supported to access the care they need, in the format they need it," she said.

"It's central to the Launceston Head to Health service model that we will be able to offer these people immediate support, but also connect them to other existing supports if they need it, therefore reducing the chances of someone 'falling through the gaps'."

Tricia Ashton will be one of the seven-strong — and growing — Launceston Head to Health team in her role as a Peer Concierge, which will involve drawing upon her personal experience of mental illness to welcome people to the centre in a warm and non-threatening way.

"When I saw the email advertising the Peer Concierge role at Launceston Head to Health, I felt like it was saying, 'Dear Trish, this job is for you!'," Tricia said.

"I feel there's huge value in having people with lived experience in mental health services. It helps to reduce stigma and provides hope, because peer workers can say to people, 'I've come through this, and you can too'."

Tricia will share the Peer Concierge role with Naomi Simpson-Kitt, who agrees the value of a permanent, ongoing peer role within a mental health service isn't just a 'bonus' — it's integral to the provision of effective, person-centred care.

"The advertisement for this role drew my attention because I have lived experience of trauma and mental illness, and also have had experience caring for someone with mental illness," Naomi said.

"I think having non-clinical staff with lived experience as a complement to clinical staff is critical when it comes to providing holistic, person-centred care."

An initial range of services will be available from an interim site on Paterson Street, with a full suite to be offered when the centre moves to a purpose-built site on Canning Street in the middle of this year. The service range will gradually increase over coming months.

Primary Health Tasmania (Tasmania PHN) has been overseeing the establishment of Launceston Head to Health under the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks program.

Primary Health Tasmania spokesperson Mark Broxton said construction at the service's permanent home at 62-64 Canning Street has been progressing well since kicking off just before Christmas.

"We received great advice from the local community about how the permanent site should look and feel and we're excited to see how people will react to seeing that feedback come to life," he said.

To access Launceston Head to Health, people can:

- **visit** the centre at 93 Paterson Street between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday
- **call** 1800 424 578
- **email** [headtohealth.launceston@stride.com.au](mailto:headtohealth.launceston@stride.com.au).

There will be no charge, and appointments won't be needed.

More information is available at [www.stride.com.au/who-we-help/adults/head-to-health](http://www.stride.com.au/who-we-help/adults/head-to-health)

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