

Media release - Mind Australia

12 February 2025

Lived experience-led support service for families and carers officially opens in Ballarat

Mind Australia, Ballarat Community Health and Grampians Community Health are delighted to announce the official opening of the Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect – a centre providing lived experience-led support for family members, carers, kin and other people who support someone experiencing mental health and/or substance use challenges.

Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is one of eight new Connect Centres funded by the Victorian Government in response to Recommendation 31 of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

It is a warm and welcoming space that provides people with the vital networks and support they need to keep caring for their loved one while still looking after their own wellbeing.

People can access individual and group based support, tailored information, advocacy, counselling, and brokerage funds through Tandem's Carer Support Fund.

Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect was officially opened by Victoria's Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt MP on Wednesday 12 February 2025. It has been operational since September 2023.

"Our network of Connect Centres play an important role in not only promoting a better quality of life for caregivers, but also offering practical services, including advice, connection to support networks and access to hardship funds," Minister Stitt said.

Staff at Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect have their own lived and living experience of supporting someone with mental health and/or substance use challenges, so they have great understanding of the needs and circumstances of people who come for support.

Mind Australia CEO Gill Callister says the Victorian government should be commended for putting lived experience at the heart of service design and delivery – a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

"By listening to carers within the community and identifying the issues that affect them, we can create tailored support options so that carers and family members can live their own lives, while continuing to care for their loved ones. Valuing lived experience like this helps us work towards a society that truly understands and embraces mental health as a natural part of life," Ms Callister said.

"Mind is proud to deliver these much-needed opportunities to utilise and harness family and carer lived experience to support and improve outcomes for primary carers throughout the Ballarat and Wimmera regions, as well as across Greater Bendigo and the Mallee via the Loddon Mallee Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect."

Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is for people of all ages and backgrounds who are living in the Ararat, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack regions. Support is free and no referral is needed.

Ballarat Community Health (BCH) CEO Sean Duffy says the Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is an incredibly important addition to the suite of mental health services available in the region.

“We acknowledge that for carers of people with a lived experience, this will provide a much-needed support program being place-based and available in Ballarat and the Grampians region,” Mr Duffy said.

Grampians Community Health (GCH) CEO Greg Little says GCH is proud to bring these much-needed support services to families, carers, and supporters across Western Victoria.

“Mental health challenges don’t just affect individuals – they have a ripple effect on families who often need guidance and assistance themselves. Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect ensures that those providing care aren’t left to manage alone,” Mr Little said.

“By working together, we are strengthening community connections and ensuring that people across Western Victoria have access to the help they need, close to home.”

Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect is located at 15 Dawson Street North, Ballarat Central. To find out more about Grampians Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect call 1800 962 008 or email grampiansmhwconnect@mindaustralia.org.au

About Mind Australia

Mind Australia is one of the largest providers of community-managed psychosocial services in Australia with a range of residential, mobile outreach, centre-based and online services.

We provide individualised, evidence-based and recovery focussed support to more than 11,000 people experiencing mental health challenges in Australia ever year.

For more information visit www.mindaustralia.org.au

About Ballarat Community Health

Ballarat Community Health (BCH) provides a wide range of primary health care, community based mental health and alcohol and other drug services and social supports. Their purpose is to ensure that people can access quality health care, no matter their circumstances.

For more information visit www.bchc.org.au

Grampians Community Health

Grampians Community Health (GCH) is a leading community health provider delivering a broad range of health care, therapeutic and community support services in the Pyrenees, Grampians and Wimmera Southern Mallee.

For more information visit www.gch.org.au

Media contacts:

Mind Australia Senior Media Advisor Keagan Ryan: Keagan.ryan@mindaustralia.org.au or 0474 000 433 (Tuesday - Friday).

Mind Australia Marketing and Communications Manager Max McLean: max.mclean@mindaustralia.org.au or 0497 333 545 (Monday).