



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

The Hon. David Coleman MP
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

The Hon. Natasha Fyles
Northern Territory Minister for Health

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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\$43 million to expand mental health services across the Territory

More than \$43 million will be invested into mental health and suicide prevention support and services across the Northern Territory over the next five years, following the signing of a landmark bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments.

The Commonwealth will invest \$30.65 million, and the Territory will invest \$13.25 million to expand mental health care services to where they are needed the most.

New mental health services, particularly for people in the group known as the “missing middle”, and suicide prevention services, will be established.

The funding includes:

- **\$15.4 million** for two new Head to Health adult mental health satellite clinics and ongoing funding for the Territory’s first Head to Health centre that opened in January this year.
- **\$9.1 million** for a new Head to Health Kids Hub to improve access to multidisciplinary team care to children.
- **\$5.7 million** to enhance two headspace centres to increase access to multidisciplinary youth mental health services. This means more staff and more resources, to reduce wait times and support more young people.
- **\$9.3 million** to establish universal aftercare services, meaning all Territorians who are discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt will receive immediate follow up care. Two trial sites will also be established in the Territory for aftercare services for people who have experienced a suicidal crisis without being admitted to hospital.
- **\$1.3 million** to ensure all people in the Territory who are bereaved or impacted by suicide can access postvention support services.
- **\$3 million** to support for perinatal mental health screening.

Today’s announcement builds upon the \$50 million already invested into mental health by the Commonwealth in recent years, including \$20 million for the new Head to Health Centre in Casuarina, and \$30 million for an additional eighteen-bed inpatient unit at Royal Darwin Hospital.

These investments are further supported by the Territory Government's \$7.5 million Stabilisation and Referral Area at Royal Darwin Hospital, which will provide a therapeutic environment for mental health clients.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt, said the agreement will ensure Territorians will have access to additional mental health support, when and where they need it.

"This landmark partnership between the Commonwealth and the Territory will have a significant impact on the lives of many Australians across the state, including young Australians, who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," Minister Hunt said.

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, David Coleman, said a key focus of the bilateral agreement would be reducing the heartbreaking suicide rate in Indigenous communities.

"Indigenous Australians die of suicide at more than double the rate of the non-Indigenous population. This is a national tragedy and through this agreement we will be working closing with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and Non-Government Organisation service providers across the Territory to ensure relevant services are culturally appropriate."

The bilateral agreement supports the Australian Government's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Northern Territory Minister for Health, Natasha Fyles, said the funding would create much needed support for Territorians in need.

"The pandemic has shown us that mental health is one of the biggest challenges confronting Australians right now.

"The mental health needs in the Territory are incredibly complex and vastly different to those in other jurisdictions – and we have continued to work in partnership with the Commonwealth to ensure these needs are supported.

"We have invested significantly in mental health support across the Territory, and we will continue to do so to improve services for Territorians. Thank you to the Commonwealth for partnering with us to make this support available to Territorians."

The bilateral agreement forms part of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, which is now in effect after being signed by the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian, Tasmanian and Northern Territory governments.

The National Agreement considers key mental health reports and inquiries including recommendations from the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health and the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's Final Advice. It outlines actions to build a comprehensive, coordinated, consumer focused and compassionate mental health and suicide prevention system to support all Australians.

The National Agreement will clarify roles and responsibilities; progress improvements in the mental health services available to adults, children and youth; improve data collection, sharing and evaluation; reduce gaps in the system of care; expand and enhance the workforce, including the peer workforce; and work to improve mental health and suicide prevention for all Australians, across a range of settings.

The Morrison Government has invested a historic \$2.3 billion in the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan through the 2021-22 Budget to deliver significant reform of the mental health system and ensure that all Australians have access to high quality, person-centred care as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

This brings the health portfolio expenditure in mental health and suicide prevention services and supports in 2021–22 to a record high of \$6.5 billion.

Australians needing support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic can access the Beyond Blue Coronavirus Wellbeing Support Service any time via telephone at 1800 512 348 or online at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Anyone experiencing distress can also seek immediate advice and support through Lifeline (13 11 14), Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800), or the Government’s digital mental health gateway, Head to Health.

If you are concerned about suicide, living with someone who is considering suicide, or bereaved by suicide, the Suicide Call Back Service is available at 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Young Australians needing support can access free services through Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800), their local headspace or online through eheadspace (<https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/>).

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