



## ACCESS TO SERVICES

### LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

*Mitchell Shire Council is seeking a commitment from the State and Federal Governments to ensure funding and access to appropriate local mental health services are provided in a timely manner as the Shire's population grows and changes.*

#### THE ASK

To ensure funding is directed to provide appropriate localised mental health services in Mitchell Shire, specifically for rural and regional communities, and ensuring the timely provision of services within the growth areas.

#### THE ASK CONSISTS OF FOUR PARTS:

**1. PROVIDE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Ensure services are not limited to out-reach and are appropriately funded to physically operate a continuum of services from prevention and early intervention to acute episodes, ensuring capacity to address the needs of a range of diverse age groups across the life spectrum.

**2. ENSURE FUNDING IS APPROPRIATELY DIRECTED TO RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Ensure funding is allocated for appropriately based local service provision in rural and regional townships.

**3. ENSURE EARLY PROVISION OF SERVICES IN GROWTH AREAS**

Ensure timely planning and provision of mental health services in growth areas where the population is increasing.

**4. PROVIDE \$300,000 PER ANNUM OF ON-GOING OPERATIONAL FUNDING FOR THE YOUTH SERVICES HUB (WALLAN)**

\$300,000 per annum for the Youth Services Hub (Wallan) to assist with ensuring appropriate services can effectively operate and provide necessary counselling and support services for young people and their families.

**5. LIVE4LIFE PROGRAM – \$285,000 TO COORDINATE, IMPLEMENT AND EVALUATE THREE YEAR PROGRAM**

Live4Life is an evidence based, rural youth mental health model to prevent youth suicide and aims to ensure that young people, teachers, parents and the wider community are better informed about mental ill health.

#### THE BENEFITS

Ensuring good mental health is essential to the wellbeing of individuals, their families and the wider community. Sufficient access to appropriate services will see increased liveability and a decrease in alcohol and/or other drug related harm, mental illness and family violence. Localised mental health services will ensure residents do not need to travel and seek appropriate services outside the municipality.

##### **Youth Services Hub Wallan**

The Hub will facilitate the co-location of a diversity of health and well-being services specifically catering for young people in Mitchell Shire.

The Youth Services Hub's main objectives are to:

- > Provide positive diversionary program opportunities as well as referral pathways for young people at risk of poor mental health.
- > Work with local stakeholders to organise delivery of activities, services and education/awareness programs specifically targeting young people.
- > Facilitate the delivery of targeted youth employment, training programs and activities.



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#### Live4Life 3 Year Program

The combined delivery of four essential components of the Live4Life model are critical to local success and sustainability of the model in Mitchell Shire. All elements are locally adaptable and flexible, and these four components have been designed, implemented and independently evaluated over the past nine years. These include:

1. Evidence based mental health education across all secondary schools and community
2. Implementation of local youth leadership and participation programs
3. Coordinated, support and Mentoring by Youth Live4Life Staff
4. School, Community and Local government Partnership (collective impact model)

#### CURRENT SITUATION

Mitchell Shire has an estimated population of 48,000 in 2018. In the next 25-30 years it is expected that 270,000 people will call Mitchell home. Many of these will be families with young children and teenagers. It is anticipated that most of this growth will occur in and around the southern townships of Beveridge, Kilmore/Kilmore East and Wallan<sup>1</sup>.

Although we are only at the beginning of our rapid growth, our communities are already experiencing limited access to health and human services. The lack of access to local services forces already vulnerable people to seek appointments further away with significant wait list times and the need to travel long distances<sup>2</sup>. Delays in treatment increase the risk of escalating symptoms. Residents are frequently required to travel and seek mental health services outside the municipality. This is difficult for many families, with almost one third of households in Mitchell Shire having access to only one car or no motorized vehicle at all<sup>3</sup>. Heightened rates of community mental illness are a symptom of systemic inadequacies, and challenges such as these are contributing to an increase of poor mental health.

Compared to Victoria, Mitchell Shire ranked poorly in terms of mental health, with the percentage of people within Mitchell Shire who feel valued by society (46.5%) amongst the lowest in the state. Furthermore, the percentage of people reporting high/very high psychological distress in Mitchell Shire is 14.8%, higher than the State measure of 12.6%<sup>4</sup>.

Lack of access to appropriate and accessible services is evident as Mitchell Shire is presenting with increasing rates of youth mental health issues including anxiety and depression, attempted suicide, substance use as well as disengagement and withdrawal from formal education.

Council acknowledges and congratulates the State Government's decision to call a Royal Commission into Mental Health, noting it is the first of its kind in Australia. It is hoped this Commission will set out credible and meaningful changes to ensure the focus on rural and regional Victorians have access to appropriate and accessible mental health services and supports.

Council is grateful to the State Government for providing the funds to complete the major-redevelopment of an existing building to establish the Youth Services Hub in Wallan. To ensure the Hub can operate to its full potential ensuing young people can access local appropriate mental health services it is necessary the government provide on-going operational funding (\$300,000 per annum).

1. Mitchell Shire Council, "About Mitchell Shire", Accessed 12 February, 2019, [www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/about-council/about-mitchell-shire](http://www.mitchellshire.vic.gov.au/about-council/about-mitchell-shire)

2. 42 Squared, Interface Council Group Human Services Gap Analysis. Final Report Version 7.3, Balwyn: 2017

3. .id the population experts. "Mitchell Shire Community Profile - Number of cars". Accessed January 9, 2018. <http://profile.id.com.au/mitchell/car-ownership>.

4. Mitchell Shire Council Social Justice Framework 2017-2021

#### MORE INFORMATION.

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MITCHELL  
SHIRE COUNCIL

