

# MEDIA RELEASE

## North west residents encouraged to HeadtoHelp

17 December 2020

Murray PHN this week launched a HeadtoHelp service in Mildura, to provide additional mental health support for people struggling with the impact of COVID-19, border closures and financial or personal issues.

The service, which is free and open to people of any age, is provided by Sunraysia Community Health Service clinicians, using the unique mental health model of care developed by Victorian PHNs for the 15 HeadtoHelp hubs that were launched in September. Since then, other HeadtoHelp services have been commissioned around the state, bringing the total number of services to more than 20.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said PHN mental health funding in the region had increased in recent years, but the pandemic had added another layer of mental health concern across the state.

“This additional funding is supporting a service that provides state-wide consistent quality of care and equity of access, as it helps users navigate a complex local mental health system.

“It will add to the region’s mental health capability and help people living in the north west to find the best mental health service for their needs.

“Our focus as a PHN is to provide help for people who need support with their mental health, often for the first time in their lives. It’s important that services are tailored and structured to fit the specific mental health needs of each region”, Matt said.

Member for Mallee Dr Anne Webster welcomed the new service, in light of the challenges caused by the pandemic in the Mallee, particularly the NSW and South Australian COVID-19 border closures.

“This year has been tough for individuals and businesses, emotionally, physically and financially and the Federal Government has responded by putting in place \$26.9 million for the HeadtoHelp program across Victoria. With the support of the Health Minister Greg Hunt and Murray PHN we have worked together to ensure the service has been able to launch here in Mildura.

“The Mildura HeadtoHelp service is a great addition to our community. It is open to anyone. Simply call 1800 595 212 to access free support.

In a recent survey by Mildura City Rural Council, forty-two per cent of respondents said that they had experienced changes to their mental health due to COVID-19 and when asked about recovery, thirty-two per cent said they needed mental health support to get them back on track.

Sunraysia Community Health Services CEO Simone Heald is thrilled be able to help the community recover from the impacts of COVID-19 through the delivery of this new service.

“We understand people are experiencing increased levels of anxiety and stress, that may be a result of having lost their personal or business income. People may also feel disconnected or isolated as a result of the pandemic our community has experienced this year.

“We have two clinicians – a mental health nurse and accredited social worker – ready to help those who call the HeadtoHelp number. We’ve also begun work with existing providers including GPs and Mildura Base Public Hospital to ensure there is an easy pathway into this great service for all community members.

HeadtoHelp is a free mental health support service that helps Victorians navigate the local mental health system, to find the best help for them.

It’s for anyone of any age, including children, young people and older adults. It’s also open to people from border communities and offers help to anyone experiencing addiction, families and carers, refugees and people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is even available to those who don’t qualify for Medicare.

No referral is required, simply HeadtoHelp by calling 1800 595 212 between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday but not on public holidays.

The sooner you HeadtoHelp the better you’ll feel.

*HeadtoHelp is a collaborative initiative of Victoria’s Primary Health Networks. This activity is supported by funding from Murray PHN through the Australian Government’s PHN Program.*

## Contact details

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