

For immediate release

Medicare Mental Health Centre officially opens in Ipswich

20 May 2024

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN, in partnership with Open Minds, is delighted to announce the official opening of Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre (formerly Head to Health) today, Monday, 20 May 2024, at Nicholas Street, Ipswich. The Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health cut the ribbon to formally mark the opening of the new service.

The Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre was established to offer immediate, walk-in support for people experiencing distress or crisis. Medicare Mental Health Centres provide welcoming and low-stigma entry to mental health support through assessment and warm referrals to appropriate local services.

This new Ipswich site will replace the pop-up centre which opened in December and will be open Monday to Friday from 10:00am to 6:00pm (excluding public holidays).

Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre is a face-to-face service that will complement the existing national Head to Health Assessment and Referral Phone Service, which has been operational in the Darling Downs and West Moreton region since July 2022, and can be reached on 1800 595 212. The launch of Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre will mean that people across the West Moreton region can choose to either call or walk in to access services.

The establishment of Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre has been driven by a comprehensive co-design process involving local GPs, service providers, representatives from West Moreton Hospital and Health Service, community members, and people with a lived or living experience of mental health concerns.

Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN CEO, Lucille Chalmers, recognises the importance of this service for our region.

'We know that mental health is a significant concern in Ipswich and across the broader West Moreton region, and that our communities need support with their mental health concerns, including depression and anxiety.'

'Unfortunately, in the 2021 Census the most common long-term health condition in Ipswich was a mental health condition – at 11% of the population - higher than the Queensland (9.6) and national (8.8) averages.'

'The good news is Medicare Mental Health Centres can offer direct support to those with immediate need but will also connect people to other mental health services across the region.' said Ms Chalmers.

The Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health, and Suicide Prevention and Assistant Minister for Rural and Regional Health, reflected on the significance of mental health support, and Medicare Mental Health Centres across Australia.

'Making mental health care more accessible for all Australians is a high priority for the Albanese Government.'

'We're committed to expanding the network of Medicare Mental Health Centres so Australians can access quality and affordable mental health care.'

'This service will help residents across Greater Ipswich access free, walk-in, clinical mental health care close to home.'

The Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre will be operated by Open Minds, who are also delivering services through the Kingaroy Medicare Mental Health Centre.

Open Minds CEO, Kate Johnson said Open Minds is pleased to offer a safe and welcoming space for people seeking support for themselves or a loved one.

'Together with our strong reputation and expertise in providing community mental health services, our team is passionate about improving the mental health of people in Ipswich and its surrounds,

'I really encourage anyone struggling with their mental health to take the first step and come into the centre to ask for help.' said Kate.

The Ipswich Medicare Mental Health Centre is free and available to people in Ipswich of all ages. No referral or appointment is necessary. For more information, visit www.ddwmphn.com.au/MentalHealthSupport.

Ends.

About the Darling Downs and West Moreton PHN

We are a not-for-profit organisation who partners with community organisations, health care providers, hospital and health services, and state and federal governments to improve primary health care services in our communities. We work within the Darling Downs and West Moreton region to better understand, support and improve the health of people living in our region.

We bring together GPs, general practice staff, allied health professionals, hospital and health services, Aboriginal Medical Services, community service providers, Elders and community members to identify the services that are needed the most, and then we fund programs and services based on these needs.

We also support primary health care providers, like GPs, practice managers, practice nurses and allied health professionals, to improve the care they provide to their patients.

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