

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Ageing  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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## MAKING PHARMACOTHERAPY MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government is making sure Victorians seeking help for opioid dependence can access medical treatment closer to home – with a new pharmacotherapy grant program now open.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced Community Health Services can apply for their share in \$8.4 million for Pharmacotherapy Grants to expand the availability of this life-changing form of addiction treatment in up to 30 locations across Victoria.

Pharmacotherapy is the use of medication (such as methadone and buprenorphine) to combat illicit opioid dependence and is an essential part of Victoria's efforts to reduce drug harm.

Currently around 15,000 Victorians use pharmacotherapy each day – mainly prescribed by GPs and nurse practitioners and dispensed by community pharmacies, as well as public specialist pharmacotherapy clinics across Victoria.

The pharmacotherapy grants program will support community health services to deliver pharmacotherapy services in areas of high demand or where there may be current or future service gaps.

Community health services in Victoria provide primary healthcare for people at risk of poorer health outcomes, and are well placed to deliver pharmacotherapy services to mitigate the problems that stem from opioid dependence.

Making pharmacotherapy accessible at these services will mean up to an additional 1,500 Victorians will be able to undertake this life-changing treatment – adding to the more than 40,000 Victorians accessing help through state-funded alcohol and drug treatment and support services each year.

The pharmacotherapy grants are part of the Labor Government's \$95 million Statewide Action Plan to reduce drug harms, which includes a further \$7.2 million investment to deliver Victoria's first hydromorphone trial to diversify treatment options for those whom traditional pharmacotherapy treatment approaches have been ineffective.

The plan is also supporting the establishment of 20 naloxone vending machines, a trial of Victoria's first overdose prevention and response helpline, the appointment of Victoria's first Chief Addiction Medicine Advisor and the delivery of Victoria's first statewide strategy to address drug harms over the long-term.

The Labor Government is dedicated to reducing drug harm – investing almost \$3 billion in alcohol and drug treatment treatments and services since 2014.

This investment includes establishing the Victoria's first medically supervised injecting room, growing the workforce and implementing the Ice Action Plan to support users and families, and make the community safer.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

*"We know pharmacotherapy is a very effective treatment for opioid dependence – these grants will expand access to care via community health services, meaning more Victorians can get the help they need, closer to home."*

*"People struggling with addiction deserve the best care wherever they are – it's why we have doubled our annual investment and introduced our Statewide Action Plan to change and save Victorian lives."*

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