

GEELONG

All the latest Geelong health news for the week of June 7

A new \$16 million hub that will treat people suffering mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction will be built in the heart of Geelong. Find out all the details here.

Olivia Shying, Geelong Advertiser

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THE state government is investing \$16 million to deliver a new Mental Health and Drug and

Alcohol Services Community Hub in the heart of Geelong, the Addy can reveal.

Operated by Barwon Health, the five-storey hub will provide greater access to treatment and support services for people experiencing mental-ill health and addiction.

Geelong MP Christine Couzens announced the hub will be located at 181 Moorabool Street and is on track to be completed in late 2022.

Construction will get underway this month, bringing more jobs to Geelong for both the build and the service in the future.

The hub will consolidate existing services onto one site and provide extended operating hours including over the weekend and public holidays.

Services will include assessment, navigation, care planning, treatment, wellbeing support and education.

Working from a contemporary, fit-for-purpose and safe facility, clinicians will provide telephone, online, walk-in, at-home and outreach services.



 The state Government is investing \$16 million for a Mental Health and Drug and

The hub will also include space for clinicians and researchers to come together and drive mental health service improvement through a learning health care system.

It will assist in responding to the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The report, released earlier this year, said Barwon Health explained that when consumers and referrers struggled to navigate the complex mental health system, those consumers ultimately ended up seeking help from the emergency system.

Barwon Health Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol clinical director Associate Professor Steve Moylan said the new hubs's ground floor would be a welcoming space for anyone to seek immediate support and care.

Prof Moylan said the space would be a fresh and identifiable place people could come to seek treatment that was not the emergency department.

It's expected the new hub will help ease pressure on Geelong hospital's busy emergency department.



📷 Celebrating news of the new hub is Barwon Health Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Services clinical director Associate Professor Steve Moylan and MP Christine Couzens. Picture: Alison Wynd

Prof Moylan said the hub was the first in a broader strategy to establish four across the region, with two more proposed for the Greater Geelong region and another in Colac.

He said the hubs could provide community entrance points for anyone of any acuity to receive immediate care.

MsCouzens said more and integrated mental health treatment and support services will make a real difference in the Geelong region and respond to the mental health needs of the area.

Up Property managing director Adam Davidson said the company was thrilled to announce the partnership with Barwon Health, as it redeveloped 181 Moorabool Street Geelong into a premium, sustainable office space.

“This important five-storey, 3268 sqm project in the heart of the Geelong CBD will have a focus on state-of-the-art architecture and sustainability,” he said.

Geelong-based Lyons Construction has been appointed to build the new facility.

— TAMARA MCDONALD

GEELONG RACES TO GET JABBED IN RECORD WEEK

The mass vaccination of Geelong residents has ramped up with Barwon Health administering one fifth of all inoculations so far in a single week.

Staff at The Community Vaccination Hub at the former Ford factory administered 10,500 coronavirus doses last week – the highest weekly number provided at the centre since it opened in April.

Nearly 8500 vaccines were given the week prior.

Barwon Health spokeswoman Kate Bibby confirmed staff had now administered around 50,000 vaccinations to eligible residents.

She said demand had continued to surge since all Victorians aged 40-49 became eligible for their first Pfizer vaccine on May 29.

“While we have experienced a large demand for bookings, walk in vaccinations are still offered each day at the Community Vaccination Hub in Norlane to those people who are eligible,” Ms Bibby said.



 Signing in for a vaccine at Barwon Health's old Ford site hub. Picture: Alan Barber

“Barwon Health closely monitors demand and, where possible, opening hours will be adjusted to meet this demand subject to vaccine supply.”

Victoria’s testing commander Jeroen Weimar said more than 1,450,000 coronavirus vaccine doses had been administered across the state since the start of the vaccination program, including 320,000 shots over the past 7 days.

He urged everyone eligible to get vaccinated but said the age limit for the rollout was unlikely to be lowered in the near future.

“We will drop the age when we start to see demand soften,” he said.

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Victorian chair Anita Munoz said GPs were hopeful of soon being able to contribute more to the state’s

vaccination roll out.

The number of vaccines distributed through GP clinics is expected to double in coming weeks.

Dr Munoz said many GPs had designed ways to deliver very large numbers of doses per week and would be able to roll of those plans if given enough vaccine supply.



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“The issue for general practice is that the supply needs to be constant so there is not a scaling up and a scaling down,” Dr Munoz said.

“(Early on) there were some weeks when delivery just didn’t occur and also when many fewer doses were delivered than promised.”

She said the RACGP would also welcome any change of protocol allowing GPs to administer Pfizer.

Dr Munoz said the increased involvement of GPs in the national vaccine rollout would be “enormously important” and essential to addressing vaccine hesitancy.

“We know the single most important factor for a person to make up their mind is what their trusted health adviser tells them,” she said.

Walk in vaccinations at the former Ford site are offered daily from 8.20am to 3.20pm.

To book a vaccine via the state government hotline call 1800 675 398.