



MEDIA RELEASE

More help is on the way for people across the Grampians Loddon Mallee with the Opioid Management Clinic at Ballarat Community Health expanding services.

The specialist clinic, established in July 2022 as the first of its type in Western Victoria, has received additional funding from the Victorian Department of Health to provide an additional two sessions each week.

The expansion for the next 18 months comes amid growing demand for services across the region, with a waiting time of up to six weeks.

From March 14, expanded services will include a telehealth clinic every Monday from 11.30am-3.30pm and a face-to-face or telehealth clinic each Thursday from 8.30am-noon at the Ballarat Community Health site at 28 Victoria Street Bakery Hill, Ballarat. This is in addition to the existing clinic held every Friday from 8.30am-3.30pm at Ballarat Community Health's site at 12 Lilburne Street, Lucas.

About 75 per cent of appointments are through telehealth, removing barriers for access to treatment across the region. The clinic is overseen by Orticare, the Grampians Loddon Mallee Pharmacotherapy Area Based Network, and covers the Central Highlands, Grampians, Loddon and Mallee regions.

Dr Adam Straub, the only Addiction Medicine Physician practising in regional Victoria provides the Opioid Management Clinic Services.

Opioid Management Clinic Coordinator Leigh Thornton said the extra sessions would help to alleviate the backlog and open up appointments for new patients.

"Our wait times had increased dramatically and patients on occasion were waiting up to five or six weeks," Mr Thornton said.

During 2022-23, the clinic saw 98 patients aged from 20 to 80 from 48 different locations, including the Ballarat region, Wangaratta, Stawell, Bendigo, Ararat, Castlemaine, Echuca, Eaglehawk, Maryborough, Nhill, Wodonga, Mildura, Horsham and surrounding areas.

Mr Thornton said people using the clinic have no out-of-pocket expenses but require a referral from a medical practitioner such as a GP, nurse practitioner or psychiatrist. Referrals can be emailed to amsclinic@bchc.org.au.

Orticare is one of five Pharmacotherapy Area Based Networks in Victoria, focusing on harm reduction by improving access to treatment for people with opioid use disorder.

For more information visit ...[PABN support for Opioid Dependence Treatment Providers – Pharmacotherapy Area Based Networks](#) or [Ballarat Community Health | Orticare \(bchc.org.au\)](#)