

GRODC Core Partners



GRODC Supporting Partners



GRODC Community Partners



From crisis to community: \$2.5 million investment to transform youth mental health in Victoria's Goulburn Region

A powerful community partnership and a landmark philanthropic investment signal a new era for young people's mental health in regional Victoria — and a new approach for how services can work together for the long-term around Australia.

The Open Dialogue Centre (ODC), Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (GSLP), Berry Street Shepparton Youth Foyer, and Goulburn Valley Health today mark a major milestone in the Goulburn Region Open Dialogue Connect (GRODC) initiative, following a \$2.5 million, four-year investment from the William Buckland Foundation, managed by Equity Trustees. GRODC is a whole-of-community response to youth mental health — one that shifts the focus from crisis-driven care to a networked, community-based approach where young people, their families and peers are at the centre.

The Goulburn Region faces significant challenges in youth mental health, with high rates of disengagement from school, employment and community life, compounded by service gaps, fragmented care and limited access to timely, culturally safe support.

GRODC responds not by adding more services to an already stretched system, but by transforming how existing services work together — across mental health, youth, community and lived experience — to help young people navigate mental health and wellbeing challenges, with the support from their family, friends and service providers.

The Open Dialogue Approach makes this transformation possible. This evidenced-way of working helps service providers create the conditions for care in a way that is genuinely responsive to each young person's needs. Central to the approach are network meetings with young people and their chosen family, friends, peers and service providers. Network meetings include trained Open Dialogue facilitators who create space for listening and building relationships, enabling young people to direct their own care with the support from their social network.

The Open Dialogue Centre's role is to enable mental health care to shift from a focus on crisis response to community-based support. ODC exists to sustain the implementation of Open Dialogue through a national evidence-base as it is scaled in different regions to meet the growing demand for this approach.

TRANSFORMING WORKFORCE CAPABILITY – ON THE GROUND IN SHEPPARTON

Training is well underway, with 35 professionals from across health, education, youth and community services now more than halfway through a year-long Foundation Course delivered by the Open Dialogue Centre. Psychiatrists, peer workers, youth housing staff and school wellbeing teams are learning side by side — a deliberate design that reflects the GRODC philosophy that Open Dialogue is a collective way of responding, not something owned by any one role or service. This will transform the mental health workforce capability in the Goulburn region.

Network Meetings — the central practice of Open Dialogue — are already being trialled with young people at the Shepparton Youth Foyer, co-facilitated by a Project Manager and Lived Experience Peer Worker.

'The William Buckland Foundation is proud to back a partnership that is built to last. What makes GRODC compelling is not just what it does, but how it does it — services working together in a way that becomes their own, sustained by the community long after the initial investment. That is the kind of change we want to support.' Alex White, Granting Specialist, William Buckland Foundation

'Grounding our work in the Open Dialogue Approach, and having ODC alongside us, has been transformative. We are building something that belongs to this community — and that will endure.'

Amy Robinson, Executive Officer, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project

'ODC's role is to support services to transform their ways of working through Open Dialogue. Community partners are committed to making sure that once this investment ends, they are equipped to work together and sustain the changes. What the William Buckland Foundation has backed is something genuinely different. This is philanthropy catalysing systemic change — the kind that sticks.'

Keith Bryant, CEO, Open Dialogue Centre

ABOUT THE OPEN DIALOGUE CENTRE

The Open Dialogue Centre makes service transformation possible and sustainable. Established in 2022 with founding support from GrantFamily Philanthropy, ODC partners with mental health, youth and community services to embed, adapt and scale evidence-based community practice across Australia. The Open Dialogue Approach aligns with Australia's National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan and is featured in the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health recommendations. ODC is a registered charity with deductible gift recipient status.

ABOUT GRODC

Goulburn Region Open Dialogue Connect (GRODC) is a whole-of-community initiative to transform youth mental health and wellbeing in the Goulburn Region of Victoria. The initiative has core partners: the Open Dialogue Centre, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, Berry Street Shepparton Youth Foyer and Goulburn Valley Health, alongside seven community partner organisations.

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The ODC team, community partners, funders, supporters, service and policy leaders gather to celebrate William Buckland Foundation's announcement to invest in ODC's flagship initiative – Goulburn Region Open Dialogue Connect (GRODC)