

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

Interim report – summary of recommendations

This paper summarises the nine recommendations made in the interim report. The Victorian Government has committed to implementing all recommendations made by the Commission.

- **Establishing the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

There will be a purpose-built facility and new entity to bring together people with lived experience, researchers and clinicians to improve service delivery and research. The centre will provide adult services, conduct interdisciplinary research enabling people with lived experience to participate in design, development and production of research programs, and act as a bridge between research and mental health practice through knowledge translation and sharing.

- **Expanding targeted acute mental health service provision**

The Commission recommends funding for an additional 170 acute mental health beds, to be delivered by mid-2022, to meet critical demand pressures. Of these, 135 will be proportionally allocated between Barwon Health and Melbourne Health and 35 will be allocated to a single provider in the private system for suitable public mental health patients.

- **Expanding suicide prevention and follow-up care**

The Commission recommends recurrent funding for all area mental health services to offer the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program. This state-wide expansion will include additional assertive outreach services and extended service delivery to provide support outside of business hours. Rural and regional areas will be supported through sub-regional health services. These initiatives will make after-care available to all Victorians who need it. Funding will also be provided for the HOPE program to expand referral and entry pathways.

In the absence of an existing service for children and young people under 18 years, this recommendation includes the creation, delivery and evaluation of the first phase of a new assertive outreach and follow-up care service for children and young people who have self-harmed or who are at risk of suicide. The Royal Children's Hospital, Monash Children's Hospital, Alfred Health and Orygen will be funded to carry out this first phase in their catchment areas. It is recommended that service design include connections to broader services, including child and family services.

- **Expanding Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing services throughout Victoria**

The Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) will be recurrently funded to develop, host and maintain a new Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre. This centre will support the expansion of social and emotional wellbeing teams throughout Victoria, based in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, within five years. This recommendation also includes a minimum of 30 scholarships to enable team members to obtain recognised clinical mental health qualifications. The teams will initially focus on Aboriginal adults and young people aged 16 years and over. The centre will be responsible for building the evidence base for effective practice with Aboriginal children.

- **Designing and delivering a service led by people with lived experience**

The Commission recommends Victoria's first residential mental health service as an alternative to acute hospital-based care, designed and delivered by people with lived experience. The service will deliver short-term treatment, care and support in a home-like community setting with outdoor space. The service will be staffed by a workforce comprising majority lived experience employees,

funded on an ongoing basis and with evaluation commencing immediately to inform continuous improvement and expansion.

- **Supporting lived experience workforces**

Another recommendation focuses on implementation of a work plan that expands the consumer and family-carer lived experience workforces through continuing professional development and learning pathways. The Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work will be added to the free TAFE course list. The work plan includes provision of coaching and supervision within organisations, developing organisational readiness and training programs to support recognition of lived experience professions, and establishing ongoing accountability mechanisms for organisations.

- **Ensuring workforce readiness**

The workforce readiness recommendation includes provision of:

- Funding for 60 additional graduate placements for allied health and other professionals and 120 additional graduate placements for nurses in public mental health services in areas of need
- 140 additional postgraduate mental health nurse scholarships covering the full cost of study
- Psychiatry rotations for an agreed proportion of junior medical officers, with this becoming mandatory for all junior medical officers by 2023
- A mental health workforce profile, improved data and mechanisms for analysing workforce gaps and projections
- A mental health leadership network with access to continuing learning and development opportunities
- Overseas recruitment campaigns and resources for overseas recruitment.

- **Establishing a new approach to mental health investment**

There will be a new revenue mechanism in the form of a levy or tax to support a substantial increase in operational funding and new spending. Additionally, there will be a dedicated capital investment fund designed and implemented for the mental health system to cover the additional investment required for a sustainable mental health system.

- **Setting up a Mental Health Implementation Office**

To implement the reforms ahead of the final report, the Commission has recommended establishing a new administrative office. The purpose of the office will be to effectively deliver the Commission's recommendations. It will operate for two years while the governance arrangements for the mental health system are designed. The office is required to develop capability in consumer outcomes measurement and to employ people with lived experience in senior positions.

Read more about the recommendations in the interim report:

<https://rcvmhs.vic.gov.au/interim-report>