

## Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

### Statement - Interim report

For too long, Victorians have struggled to access the support they need from a mental health system overwhelmed by demand and driven by crisis. On 28 November 2019, the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System delivered its interim report with nine [recommendations](#) responding to immediate needs.

This report presents the early stages of the reform work and reflects 'extensive feedback about the magnitude of existing problems'. In reviewing the report, the Centre welcomes the Commission's important acknowledgement that 'mental health is shaped by the social, cultural, economic and physical environments in which people live'.

We welcome recommendations to build the evidence for what works for Aboriginal children's social and emotional wellbeing and the development of an assertive outreach and follow-up care service for children who have attempted suicide, have suicidal ideation or have self-harmed. Attention to lived experience of people with mental illness and the strong commitment to Aboriginal self-determination in this report are highly commendable.

Infants, children and families living in poverty, experiencing family violence or in contact with the child protection system have often missed out on critical opportunities to improve mental wellbeing and break cycles of disadvantage. We need a mental health system that builds the foundations for good mental health, recognises the importance of the first thousand days and prioritises support for infants, children and families with complex needs.

The Centre is concerned that infant mental health and the relationship between mental health outcomes and the first thousand days of a child's life have been understated in this report despite being emphasised in several submissions including the Centre's.

We particularly note the absence of any early recommendations focused on prevention and early intervention for children and families, particularly those experiencing disadvantage. Preventative action is urgently needed to begin easing the pressure on the system that propels it toward crisis responses.

The Commission estimates that child protection sees an additional \$41.8 million in costs due to poor mental health. CEO of the Centre Deb Tsorbaris in responding to the interim report said, "We have a responsibility to those in care and we must ensure that they're not left out of the picture. We look forward to a strong set of recommendations that directly address the challenges faced by children, young people, carers and families in contact with child protection".

The Centre will be urging the Commission to prioritise infants and children in their final report and recommendations. We must not miss this critical opportunity to secure investment in prevention and ensure quality supports for infants, children and families.

The interim report and a summary can be downloaded here:

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

You can read our full analysis [here](#) and the Centre's submission to the Commission [here](#).

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