



The next phase of reform

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Victoria





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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

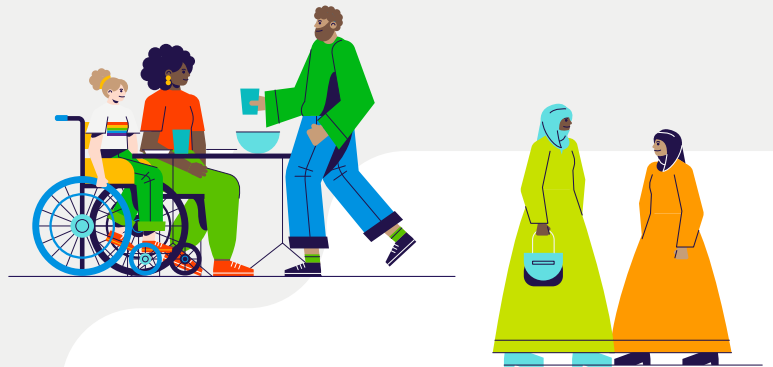
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ISBN 978-1-76131-709-5

Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services. This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria

We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, learn, work and play. We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders and leaders, past and present. We recognise the ongoing enrichment Aboriginal people, culture and communities bring to the cultural landscape of this state. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

Since time immemorial, Aboriginal people have practised their lores, customs and languages and nurtured Country through spiritual, material and economic connections to land, water and resources. These connections are central to Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing.

We hope that this strategy will facilitate action to better understand and address the experiences and priorities of First Peoples. More broadly, we hope that it will promote healing and encourage all Victorians to learn more about the deep wisdom and social and emotional wellbeing that is held in the world's oldest continuing culture.

We know we get better outcomes when Aboriginal

people are making the decisions that affect First Nations communities. Victoria's Treaty process gives us a pathway to give First Peoples a say on the policies that impact First Peoples' lives. We commit to working proactively to support this work in line with the aspirations of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

We look forward to a time where, through the Treaty process, we have recognised the wrongs of the past, made peace, and can walk together with greater respect, understanding and connection, and fully celebrate the strength, resilience and diversity of First Nations people living in Victoria.



Statement of recognition of lived and living experience of mental illness

The Department of Health recognises the strength of people living with trauma, neurodiversity, mental illness, and substance use or addiction, and their families, carers, and supporters, and remembers those who have been lost to suicide.

We acknowledge the many individuals and organisations who contributed their time, stories, experience, and wisdom to guide and contribute to the reform program and the development of this plan.

We also recognise the continued advocacy of the mental health and wellbeing sector and the Victorian community for improved mental health outcomes, including calling for and contributing to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Thank you



We warmly thank the people across Victorian communities and services who attended the mental health sector forums in 2023 and the members of our advisory and partnership bodies. Your input has helped shape this plan.

We acknowledge your insights and generosity in sharing your perspectives and time. There remains a lot to learn from all participants in the mental health and wellbeing sector, including from people with lived experience, their families, carers and supporters, and the workforce as we move into the future of reform implementation.

We will continue to seek to listen, understand, act and empower.



Minister Ingrid Stitt – My Commitment



The final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System was a pivotal moment on the path to transforming Victoria's mental health system. The Royal Commission set an ambitious 10-year vision for a more compassionate mental health and wellbeing system for all Victorians. It called for a complete transformation of the mental health system to embed deep and enduring change, ensuring that Victorians living with mental illness, and their families, carers and kin, are supported to live full and contributing lives.

Since the final report was handed down, we have faced increasing demand for mental health and wellbeing services and support with bushfires, floods and the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite this, our collective work to transform the Victorian mental health and wellbeing system is well underway and there is so much to be proud of.

The first phase of our reform journey has seen:

- consumer and carer rights enshrined into the law
- the delivery of new services providing the care people need, when they need it, closer to home

- an increased focus on early intervention and programs that improve wellbeing in the community
- an expansion of our diverse workforce and the embedding of lived and living experience voices and leadership throughout the system.

Everything we have achieved together so far has only been possible through the hard work and dedication of our sector, our mental health and wellbeing workforce, those with lived and living experience and the Victorian community.

As we move from the first phase of implementation into the next, I want to reiterate the Victorian Government's commitment to delivering on every recommendation of the Royal Commission. We remain focused on delivering foundational reforms to drive lasting cultural change.

Your feedback has helped to shape the priorities and pace that follow in this plan.

Together, we must build on the momentum of our achievements so far.

As Minister for Mental Health, my priorities through this next phase of work include: continuing to address system demand and driving performance; expanding the focus on prevention and early intervention, especially for young Victorians and our regional and rural communities; building and retaining our highly skilled workforce; and continuing to embed lived and living experience in all levels of the mental health and wellbeing system.

Earlier this year, I was called to appear before the Yoorrook Justice Commission. Through that truth-telling process, I acknowledged that self-determination for First Peoples' social and emotional wellbeing has not been prioritised enough. First Peoples communities hold the knowledge to determine how to best support the social and emotional wellbeing of their communities.

I am committed to continue working with First Peoples' and organisations, including Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, to continue implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System and to look for opportunities to hand over power and resources to communities to determine how community can be best supported to be mentally well – in a way that is guided by First Peoples' holistic understanding of health, and social and emotional wellbeing.

People are at the heart of our system and the Victorian government is unwavering in our commitment to genuine and long-lasting change. All Victorians will benefit from the collective role we play over the next phase of reforms and beyond. I look forward to continuing this important work together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ingrid Stitt'.

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health

Our Priorities



Focusing on prevention and promotion

To keep people well in their communities and reduce demand on acute mental health and wellbeing services.



Growing strong, safe and supported workforces

Including diversifying and retaining talent, and building worker skills and capabilities.



Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level

By growing lived experience leadership as well as embedding lived expertise and perspectives that reflect the rich diversity of the communities we serve.



Delivering new and better services

That are connected, inclusive and locally accessible to further improve Statewide and Area Services (community and bed-based services).



Providing more support to the system

So that it can deliver improved services to deliver better outcomes with stronger accountability.



Driving cultural change

By helping the sector to align its practice with the principles of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*.

Cross-cutting priority:

Enriching our ways of working, including revamped sector and clinical engagement and responding to the unique strengths and needs of diverse communities.

Looking back at the first phase of reform

It's a critical time for the Victorian mental health and wellbeing sector, as we continue to work through the Royal Commission's 74 recommendations. As they are implemented, these recommendations will better meet the needs of Victorians and support them to live healthy and fulfilled lives. It's about providing better treatment, care and support for all Victorians closer to home – care that is accessible and available when needed.

These recommendations can be boiled down to one concept: person-centred care. And it is this absolute dedication to treating people the way we all want and deserve to be treated that will shape future activity.

This plan outlines the way forward for this journey of mental health and wellbeing system transformation. It builds on the exceptional progress already made and has been developed by listening and responding to what we have heard from the sector and community so far.

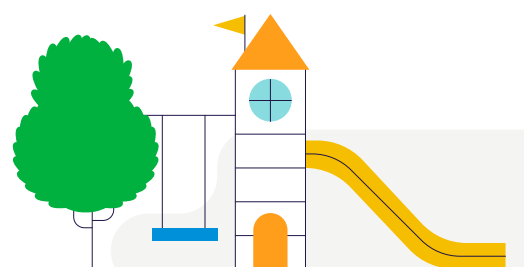
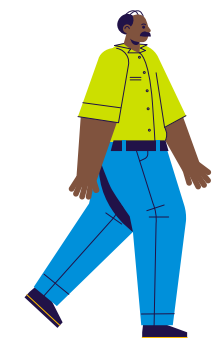
This next phase of reform will build on what has already been achieved. There will be a greater focus on prevention, promotion and early intervention and more care being delivered in the community, closer to home.

This plan is a roadmap, so it doesn't include every step and activity. Instead, it signals our priorities and the direction we are taking in this next stage of reform.

The reform journey so far has seen significant progress that deserves to be recognised and celebrated. Before we look at the direction for the next stage of reform, it is important to pause and reflect on all that has already been achieved.

We've laid the groundwork with a focus on designing and delivering the foundations of the reform journey. We are driving cultural change through the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*, and have expanded our workforce, delivered new services closer to home, and embedded lived experience at every level. This plan aims to build on these achievements and prioritise future reforms.

Since the Royal Commission's findings, we have invested more than \$6 billion into Victoria's mental health system. This represents the single largest investment in mental health by any state government in Australia, ensuring that more Victorians have access to the mental health support they need and deserve.



The snapshot

There is much to be proud of and some key achievements to date include:

Priority: Focusing on prevention and promotion

Statewide roll-out of the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program for adults

Established the Child and Youth HOPE Program



Established

10

Social Inclusion Action Groups

Established 'Local connections', a social prescribing trial delivered through the first six Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals

Provided Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants to

40

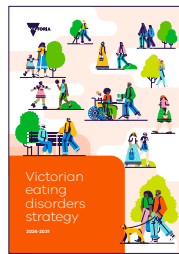
organisations

Funded a number of prevention and aftercare programs including the Strong Brother Strong Sister program, Yarning Safe N Strong, Roses in the Ocean's Peer CARE Companion Warmline, Mind Australia's LGBTIQA+ aftercare and Switchboard Victoria's suicide prevention program

Released a new Victorian suicide prevention and response strategy 2024-2034



Launched a new Eating disorders strategy 2024-2034



Scaled up the Balit Murrup demonstration site initiative to establish

25

multi-disciplinary Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing teams across the state



The Balit Durn Durn Centre is leading codesign of an Aboriginal-led approach to prevent and respond to Aboriginal suicide

Commenced a trial of a Distress Brief Support program in Greater Shepparton and Darebin in collaboration with the Commonwealth government

Established the Wellbeing Promotion Office

Established the Suicide Prevention and Response Office



Priority: Growing strong, safe and supported workforces

Invested more than

\$600 million

in workforce reforms, creating:

2,500+

early career new mental health roles

1,203

scholarships

17%

growth in funded FTE in public mental health and wellbeing services

More than

100

lived experience roles

90

psychiatry registrar roles

300

psychology registrar roles

1,200

roles for mental health nurse graduates or those transitioned from general to mental health nursing

900

roles for allied health graduates or general to mental health transition

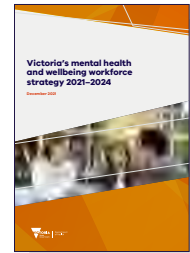


Nation leading investment in lived experience workforce

Expanded the world-first Rainbow Tick program to deliver more provider accreditation so that services are safer and more affirming for LGBTIQA+ communities

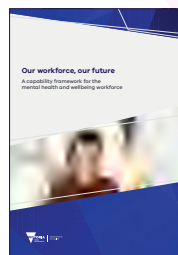


Released the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024



Established a new incentive program to attract mental health workers to rural and regional Victoria

Launched the workforce capability framework: *Our Workforce, Our Future*



Funded and commenced recruitment of

10

Koori Mental Health Liaison Officers in Infant Child and Youth Area Mental Health Services

49

scholarships have been awarded to Aboriginal undergraduate and post-graduate students studying a mental health discipline since 2021-22 under the social and emotional wellbeing scholarship program.

This program is helping build a skilled and qualified Aboriginal mental health and social and emotional wellbeing workforce.

Funded the continuation of the Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship Program, increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people qualified as mental health professionals



Priority: Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level

Invested

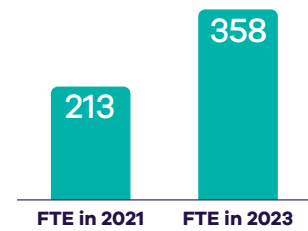
\$51 million

in lived and living experience workforce development



Increased the number of lived and living experience workforce roles by

68%



Trained

75

consumers and family carers as part of the Lived Experience Peer Cadet Program

Enshrined in legislation designated senior lived experience roles at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, including lived experience Commissioners and co-CEOs

Established a world leading Lived Experience Branch in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division of the department, with the first Executive Director of Lived Experience

Developing a lived and living experience leadership strategy



Provided funding for consumer and carer peak bodies to support their core functions and host participation registers that enable consumer and carer voices to inform reform and deliver key initiatives

Provided funding to all state funded mental health services in Victoria to employ designated lived and living experience roles in all local services, from governance to operations and workforce

Significantly increased the number of staff, including in leadership, in lived and living experience roles

Established the Lived Experience Strategic Partnership (LESP) to provide strategic advice to the Victorian Government on the mental health transformation agenda and advocate for system transformation, service improvement and better consumer, family and carer outcomes





Priority: Delivering new and better services

Supported more than

13,000

Victorians across

15

new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, to address the 'missing middle', with free mental health treatment and support



Delivered Victoria's first child and family centre, which provides vital residential mental health and wellbeing treatment to children under 11

Delivered Australia's first dedicated public women's mental health service known as the Women's Recovery Network (Wren)

Delivered

3

new Children's Health and Wellbeing Locals for community-based mental health care in partnership with the Commonwealth

Delivered

8

family-led Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres, employing



84

designated family carer roles

Delivered

179

new mental health beds, including acute bed services and Hospital in the Home beds

Invested in

6

new emergency department mental health, alcohol and other drugs hubs across Victoria

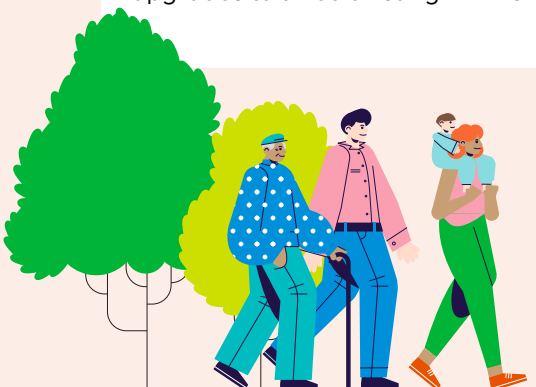
Appointed consortium to design and deliver the new mental health statewide trauma service, Transforming Trauma Victoria

Work is underway to double the capacity of Victoria's new Youth Prevention and Recovery Care Centre (YPARC) network with five new, 10-bed YPARC centres being built across the state and upgrades to three existing YPARC centres

Established the Hamilton Centre, a new specialist mental health and addiction service

Delivered the North-West Women's Prevention and Recovery Care centre (Yana Yana)

Commenced work to deliver Victoria's first lived experience residential service as an alternative to hospital care





Priority: Delivering new and better services (continued)

Invested

\$1.2 million

to co-design two Aboriginal healing centres

Led by the Balit Durn Durn Centre, this self-determined approach involving Aboriginal communities, services and knowledge holders to design and develop the healing centres is

an Australian first



Funded the Victorian Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Organisation (VACCHO) to undertake codesign for a culturally appropriate, family-oriented service model for infants and children who require intensive social and emotional wellbeing supports (known as The Nest)



Provided dedicated funding to Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services to ensure people with co-occurring needs and their families and supporters receive comprehensive and integrated treatment, care and support that best meets their needs, strengths and preferences

Commenced a program of work to enhance and expand the capacity of community mental health services through the

\$33.4 million

Community Mental Health Expansion Program

Delivered infrastructure improvements to mental health facilities through the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Capital Renewal Fund

Commenced capital works to deliver new and refurbished acute mental health inpatient beds in Shepparton and planning activities for further regional beds



Priority: Providing more support to the system

Introduced activity-based funding for bed-based services

Consulted with more than

200

people from the sector to develop the Outcomes and Performance Framework

Led by VACCHO, established the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre for Excellence, the Balit Durn Durn Centre

Released Victoria's first *Statewide Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and Capital Plan*

Commenced work to build a more contemporary information architecture for the system

Signed a national and bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth to improve mental health and suicide prevention



Priority: Driving cultural change

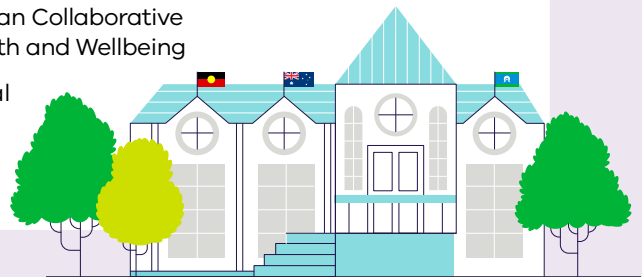
Developed and commenced the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*

Designed handbook and easy to read guides on what the new Act means for the sector and community

Provided training and Act implementation leads across mental health and wellbeing services to support implementation of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*

Legislated the role of Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Established the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing
Established the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission



Reduced the use of restrictive practices in line with the Mental Health Improvement program's *Towards Elimination of Restrictive Practices*

20%

reduction in physical restraint

23%

reduction in seclusion

30%

reduction in mechanical restraint (from October 2022 to April 2024)

Implemented opt-out non-legal advocacy for people who are at risk of, or are receiving compulsory treatment so consumers automatically receive free support to help them participate in decision making, express their views and exercise their rights

Funded Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing services to support cultural safety training and community engagement activities

Commenced a program of capital works to improve the safety of vulnerable consumers in intensive care areas

Expanded access to legal representation at Mental Health Tribunal hearings

Mandated cultural safety training in health services



The detail

Having seen a snapshot of the incredible progress that has already been made, this next section will provide details on what has been delivered in the first phase of reform.

The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System called for complete transformation. It called for change to build a system where people who are living with mental illness – and their families, carers and supporters – are helped to live full and contributing lives.

The final report, released in 2021, marked the beginning of our long-term reform journey, with investments focused on:

- our infrastructure pipeline
- reorientating the system towards a community-based model of care
- putting consumers and families at the centre of treatment, care and support
- growing the workforce and long-term workforce reforms
- delivering more mental health beds to meet critical demand
- establishing legal foundations for a reformed system
- delivering new and improved services to address the needs of Victorians, with a focus on young people.

We also legislated and established a levy to create a dedicated mental health fund, which is ongoing and must be spent on our mental health and wellbeing system. The Mental Health Levy is expected to raise over \$1 billion in 2024-25.

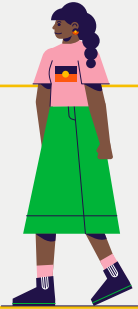
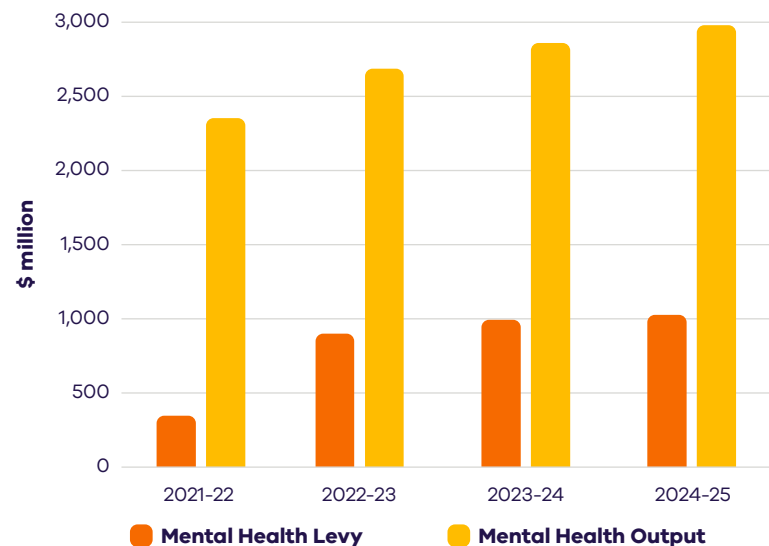


Figure 1: Mental health and wellbeing output funding and Mental Health Levy since introduction



* Victorian Budget Papers, 2021-22 to 2024-25

* Victoria Annual Financial Reports 2021-22, 2022-23



Most Victorians, directly or indirectly, will experience poor mental health. It is incumbent on us, as a community, to ensure that mental health and wellbeing is not consigned to the shadows. Our families, friends, loved ones, neighbours and colleagues must be able to depend on a responsive and high-quality mental health and wellbeing system."

– Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, Final Report





Priority:

Focusing on prevention and promotion

We understand how important prevention and promotion are in mental health and wellbeing and the role they play in reducing the severity and impact of mental health challenges. When we invest in prevention and promotion, it not only improves someone's quality of life but also makes our communities healthier and reduces demand on mental health services.

Action:

Statewide roll-out of the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program for adults, including expanded referral pathways and extended service hours

Benefit: Provides individualised, intensive and one-on-one support for Victorians who have self-harmed or are at risk of suicide. The new referral process will support more people to access their local HOPE service without the need to attend a hospital emergency department, which also reduces pressure on hospitals.

Action:

Established the Child and Youth HOPE Program

Benefit: Provides more targeted support for children and young people who have attempted suicide, have suicidal ideation or have self-harmed. The program is available at Alfred Health, Monash Children's Hospital, Royal Children's Hospital and Orygen.





Priority: Focusing on prevention and promotion

Case Study:

Child and Youth HOPE

The Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program is a peer, wellbeing (psychosocial) and clinical aftercare service that delivers practical, tailored and accessible support for people following a suicide attempt, self-harm or for those at risk of suicide.

The Child and Youth HOPE provides youth-friendly support to young people for up to three months following a suicidal crisis, helping them identify and build protective factors against suicide.

Benefit: A service model that was codesigned with children and young people to identify what works for them.



For the first time in my life I feel like I've found mental health support that actually addresses what I need it to and things are looking up."

– Young person

Benefit: Youth peer workers who connect with young people to safely share their experiences and provide a sense of comfort and understanding.



Thank you so much for the past three months. You've given me back my life. At first I didn't believe I could make any progress in our short time but you've shown me how I can be my own authentic and best self by inspiring me with your unapologetic authenticity and understanding. I look forward to seeing what my future holds and I really owe it all to you and [HOPE team member]."

– Young person

Benefit: Family and carer peer workers who can work with key people that a young person identifies as important for their recovery – this may include families (including chosen families), carers, housemates, friends, intimate partners and other personal support networks.



I am so grateful for this program. My whole family is more open and understanding of each other. Sometimes people feel like they have to stay in this dark corner but the HOPE program taught us that we don't need to stay in the dark, they taught us that there is always a way. You can try one way and if it doesn't work, you can try another. The HOPE program has given me so much hope".

– Mother of a consumer

Benefit: Support with practical needs, such as linking people with job service agencies, providing financial support and assisting with transition to independence such as moving out of the family home and living independently. Tailored and strength-based support, in contrast to traditional interventions for young people with suicidality that were limited to clinical interventions for specific mental health concerns.



I believe my experience with the HOPE Team has been invaluable. Each [team member] comes from a place of understanding whether it be from a 'Lived Experience Worker' or a 'Social Worker' position. The various roles... enabled me to experience the therapy process in flexible ways with alternative perspectives."

– Young person



Priority: Focusing on prevention and promotion

Action:

Established 10 Social Inclusion Action Groups to strengthen vital social connections

Benefit: They are designed by the community, for the community, to deliver initiatives that boost social inclusion and connection and combat loneliness. They are led by local community members and leaders.

Action:

Established 'Local connections', a social prescribing trial in the first six Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

Benefit: Support for people to engage in non-clinical community-based activities, such as art, creative, nature or other groups and activities to reduce loneliness and social isolation.

Action:

Launched the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants, with funding provided to over 40 community-led organisations

Benefit: Community-led organisations from Victorian diverse communities can strengthen and deliver safe, responsive and inclusive mental health services. Diverse communities eligible for funding include LGBTIQ+ Victorians, Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and Victorians with disability.

Action:

Established the Suicide Prevention and Response Office

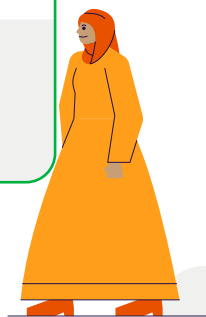
Benefit: The office ensures a coordinated suicide prevention and response approach across the state, and in partnership with the Commonwealth Government.

By co-producing, implementing and monitoring the new Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy, we elevate suicide prevention and response across all government-decision making.

Action:

Established the Wellbeing Promotion Office

Benefit: By coordinating an approach that brings communities, service providers and government together we can strengthen our focus on prevention, promotion and healing.





Priority:

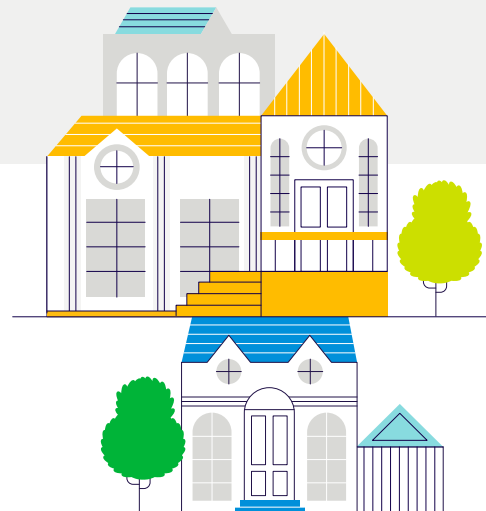
Growing strong, safe and supported workforces

Since 2020-21, we have commissioned more than 2,500 new roles in the mental health sector. This investment of over \$600 million includes roles across nursing, lived experience, medicine, psychology, social work, occupational therapy, in both graduate and transition programs.

Additionally, more than 1,200 scholarships have been awarded to support training pathways for mental health nursing, allied health practitioners, alcohol and other drug specialists, and lived experience workers.

We've awarded 576 Full Course Fee Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarships, 182 Allied Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Postgraduate Scholarships, 50 Lived and Living Experience University Scholarships, 365 \$3,000 Postgraduate Mental Health Nurse Scholarships and 30 Psychiatric State Enrolled Nursing Grants.

These initiatives have contributed to Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce growing by 15% in employed FTE from 2021 to 2023. The *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* has prioritised actions to stabilise the system and establish a foundation for long-term reform.



Action:

Released the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy* and *Our Workforce, Our Future*, which is a capability framework for the mental health and wellbeing workforce

Benefit: Victoria's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* is prioritising steps to stabilise the system and lay the foundations to have the workforce we need for the future.

Our workforce, our future is being used to inform workforce development planning, enhance professional learning delivery and support the design of multidisciplinary teams across the mental health and wellbeing sector.

Action:

Established a new regional incentive program for the mental health workforce

Benefit: Attraction, recruitment and retention of new workers to priority positions in state funded mental health and alcohol and other drug services in rural and regional Victoria.



Priority:

Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level

Embedding lived and living experiences to inform more effective approaches to care is crucial so that services are better tailored to meet the diverse needs of those seeking support.

Action:

More than \$51 million invested in a program of work delivered by nine agencies to develop lived and living experience workforce (LLEW). This includes training, qualifications and career pathways; scholarships and cadetships; discipline specific supervision and practice supports; improvement to workplace safety and wellbeing and supports for organisations employing LLEW.

Benefit: More supported pathways into lived and living experience work, with 75 students participating in the peer cadet program, 170 positions annually for discipline specific supervision for consumer and carer mental health workforces, 50 full scholarships for the Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work and Tertiary scholarships and grants for training and development.

Case Study:

Peer Wellbeing Navigator

Mike Chiswell, a Peer Wellbeing Navigator at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Frankston, found his passion for peer work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Witnessing mental health challenges among young adults, he felt a strong desire to support others using his own experiences of mental ill-health and recovery.



In 2022, he participated in the Lived Experience Peer Cadet Program, a new workforce reform initiative. He recommends the program to anyone wanting to pursue a career in peer work, considering the strong support from mentors and supervisors he received during his cadetship.

Now employed as a Peer Wellbeing Navigator, he enjoys supporting the local community. He finds fulfillment in providing hope and guidance, helping others move toward recovery.



The work is extremely rewarding, especially that moment when someone walks in, and they are ready to ask about getting help. It is a pivotal moment for some people, and it is a privilege to be part of that initial conversation and to ask - how can we help?"

It is really rewarding to walk alongside and support people to explore how they would like to move toward recovery, while sharing what has been helpful for me. I remember feeling alone during some parts of my own recovery and I love that I can join others for a time, so they don't feel the same."



Priority: Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level

Action:

Appointed two dedicated Lived and Living Experience Commissioners of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

Benefit: Lived and living experience leaders elevate consumer and carer rights and expertise to ensure lived experience perspectives shape reform and are embedded in the transformed mental health and wellbeing system.

Action:

Established a world-leading Lived Experience branch in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, led by the first Executive Director of Lived Experience

Benefit: Ensures lived experience expertise is embedded in our work, guiding design and delivery of our programs and services to improve outcomes and experiences for consumers, carers and families.





Priority:

Delivering new and better services

Creating inclusive and accessible services at every level to provide high quality care for all Victorians is essential, along with building community-based services so people can access care close to home.

Action:

Established 15 new Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals, including nine in regional Victoria

Benefit: Locals have supported more than 13,000 Victorians to date with treatment, care and support close to home, at no cost and with no requirement for a referral. This helps to address the 'missing middle' of the mental health and wellbeing system.

Action:

Delivered three new Children's Health and Wellbeing Locals, in partnership with the Commonwealth, to provide community-based mental health and wellbeing care for infants, children and families close to home

Benefit: Free services for families with children aged 0-11 years experiencing developmental, behavioural and emotional challenges – including access to free assessments for development issues and autism. These services are available in Brimbank Melton, Loddon and South Metropolitan Melbourne regions.

Case Study:

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals

Gippsland 2024

Navigating the storm

Exacerbated by the Gippsland storms, a local resident found themselves experiencing heightened levels of anger that significantly impacted their employment and relationships.

After presenting to the GP clinic, the individual partnered with clinical and lived experienced staff to complete a self-referral to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Local in Latrobe to initiate mental health and wellbeing supports for anger management. Through agreed clinical support, they began developing strategies to implement when they recognised they were feeling overwhelmed.

The individual is now enthusiastically participating in their own supports and has scheduled ongoing fortnightly appointments that focus on learning different strategies to manage their feelings.

Writing a new story

A local resident had been displaced from their rental property due to storm damage. After finding themselves displaced and living in a shared home, this individual was feeling overwhelmed.

Attending an appointment with the Local Service Community Link worker provided a safe space to discuss their situation and identify the types of supports they needed. This individual is now receiving clinical supports to explore change processes and working to find strategies to help manage their symptoms.

In addition to clinical support, they are attending a creative writing group to connect with like-minded community members. The individual stated they have connected with other people in the group and feel like this form of therapy aligns with their creative style and complements their work.



Priority: Delivering new and better services

Action:

Delivery of eight family-led Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect centres

Benefit: Free services to those who are supporting people living with mental health and substance use challenges or psychological distress. Located across Victoria, including five in regional Victoria.

Case Study:

Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres

The new Connect centres are a ‘first of their kind’ and represent a new and innovative approach to delivering mental health and wellbeing services in Victoria. Through lived experience-led codesign, the Connect centres have created a warm, welcoming space which is easily accessible and available to families, carers, kin, and supporters of all ages.

The challenges and needs of families and carers can be recognised and addressed through connection with peer workers, irrespective of whether the individual they support is registered with another service.



I have been a carer for 11 years, caring for three siblings with a disability, been a young carer and from a migrant background. I didn't realise I was a carer until I joined the program. I felt less alone and helpless, and I found a place to get away to when things became too much to handle. I gained confidence to take care of myself."

– Connect participant

Connect centres offer both informal interactions and structured group activities like in-person and telephone peer and wellbeing supports, education and family therapy. They offer a non-clinical environment that provides temporary respite for individuals, as well as access to crisis-related supports including brokerage and flexible funding for practical needs.



The majority of the Connect centre workers are individuals in designated and declared family carer positions. These roles span across peer work, management, community development, program coordination, and family therapy.



Working with the Department has been a positive and proactive partnership. I have felt not only our cause and program to be respected and valued, but I and centre staff with lived experience have felt truly valued and that our input and contributions have been asked for and received, with high regard and acknowledged with appreciation."

– Connect provider



Priority: Delivering new and better services

Action:

Expanded acute bed-based services by delivering 179 new acute mental health beds, including piloting Hospital in the Home for mental health and delivering a new specialist women's mental health service

Benefit: It's critical that people can access acute care when and where they need it. To manage increased demand across the state, we have added 179 new acute mental health beds including at:

- Northern Health
- Western Health
- Royal Melbourne Hospital
- Barwon Health
- a new Specialist Women's Mental Health Service.

Case Study:

Mental Health Hospital in the Home

Mental Health Hospital in the Home (HiTH) provides treatment and care in the comfort of a person's home for moderate to severe experiences of mental illness.

A multidisciplinary team provides home-based and virtual care for consumers as an alternative to an in-hospital stay.

HiTH has been piloted in two health services, Orygen Specialist Program from December 2020 and Barwon Mental Health Service from March 2021.

Benefit: More flexible, meets individual needs and allows consumers to continue their daily lives.



...in the HiTH program I was always asked what my plans were for the day... like a phone call before they came [when] they were coming and whether that time suits me."

– HiTH consumer

Benefit: Breaks down existing power imbalances between consumers and mental health service provider staff and enhances autonomy and control for consumers.



...all the feedback by families and young people is that they do feel in control that it actually is their environment and it's not just a symbolic thing it's an actual thing. They let you into their house and are hosting you so it's an incredibly different power dynamic happening at that moment of actually being let in."

– HiTH worker

Benefit: Multidisciplinary care creates person-centred, recovery-oriented care and supports consumers to be decision-makers.



...we've got basically the right multidisciplinary team to be able to deliver those interventions and each of those disciplines can come into the family home to describe what's going on and make sure everybody understands what the process is."

– HiTH worker

Benefit: Enables staff to better work with and support family and carers of mental health consumers.



I feel that this was the most wonderful relief I've had in the help and the support from this [HiTH team]."

– HiTH carer



Priority: Delivering new and better services

Action:

Published guidance and provided funding to support the delivery of integrated mental health and alcohol and other drug treatment, care and support.

Benefit: A shared vision, principles and expectations of service providers to ensure people with co-occurring needs and their families and supporters receive comprehensive and integrated treatment, care and support that best meets their needs, strengths and preferences.

Action:

Invested in six new emergency department mental health, alcohol and other drugs hubs across the state, to better support Victorians seeking urgent mental health, alcohol and other drug care.

Benefit: The new hubs mean people presenting at emergency departments with mental health and AOD concerns can be fast-tracked to specialist, dedicated care, providing them with the right support sooner and easing pressure on emergency departments.

Case Study:

Mental Health and AOD Emergency Department Hubs

Each year, around 6,800 individuals grappling with mental health and substance use challenges visit the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug (MHAOD) Hub at St Vincent's Hospital in Melbourne.

This pioneering Hub is part of a \$32 million initiative funded by the Victorian Government to enhance urgent care across the state.

The Hub features a six-bed short-stay unit, private consultation rooms, and a communal space where patients and carers can spend time together. The environment is designed to be calming, comfortable, and secure, which contrasts the often overwhelming and chaotic atmosphere of a traditional emergency department.

Key to the Hub's success is its multidisciplinary team, which includes Emergency Department (ED) physicians, mental health clinicians, peer workers, alcohol and other drug specialists, care coordinators, Hub coordinators, psychiatry consultants, and ED nursing staff.

Since its inception, the Hub's impact has been monumental. Patients are seen by a doctor much more quickly and experience a 40 per cent shorter stay compared to previous models. This efficiency has created the capacity for an additional 20 patients to be seen each day in the main Emergency Department.



Through our new Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Hub, we are now able to provide excellent care for these groups in a purpose-built environment that is patient and carer centred. It is 100 percent focused on their specific needs."

The Hub is not just a location but a model of care that really considers patient needs, from start to end,"

– Dr Jonathan Karro, Director of Emergency at St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne



Priority: Delivering new and better services

Action:

Appointed consortium to design and deliver the new mental health statewide trauma service, Transforming Trauma Victoria.

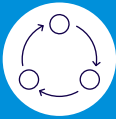
Benefit: Engaged with stakeholders and people with lived experience to agree on the vision of a new mental health statewide trauma service – Transforming Trauma Victoria - and appointed a consortium to design and deliver the service. They will develop, deliver, and disseminate best practices in trauma care.

Action:

Establishing five new Youth Prevention and Recovery Care (YPARC) services in Geelong, Traralgon, Ballarat, Shepparton and Heidelberg. Another three existing YPARC services in Frankston, Dandenong and Bendigo are being refurbished.

Benefit: By delivering a YPARC in every region of the state, young people experiencing mental health challenges can access treatment, care and support in a home-like setting, close to their support networks. Additionally, YPARCs function as both a 'step up' from community care or a 'step down' from hospital.





Priority:

Providing more support to the sector

In our continuous efforts to strengthen support within Victoria's mental health sector, these initiatives address critical needs, evaluate investment factors, and measure the outcomes of reforms.

Action:

Undertook consultation with more than 200 people with experience of the mental health and wellbeing system to develop the *Outcomes and Performance Framework*.

Benefit: Helps guide the transformation of Victoria's mental health system and provides a way to understand and measure the impact of reforms and the difference they make to people's lives.

Action:

Developed Victoria's first *Statewide Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and Capital Plan*.

Benefit: Consistent guidance for future government decisions, planning, and investments in mental health treatment, care, and support services.

Action:

Building a contemporary information architecture including a new statewide Electronic Mental Health and Wellbeing Record, a new Mental Health Information and Data Exchange and a new user-friendly online consumer portal.

Benefit: Delivering a more seamless, user friendly and system-wide Information and Communications Technology system that supports consumers to access their information.

Action:

Signed a national and bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth to improve mental health and suicide prevention.

Benefit: Following this agreement, the Commonwealth committed to invest \$247.9 million to help improve mental health and suicide prevention support and services for Victorians from 2022 to 2027.





Priority:
Driving cultural change

The *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* replaced the *Mental Health Act 2014* on 1 September 2023, providing the legislative foundations for system transformation.

The key principles of the Act require mental health and wellbeing service providers to:

- support the dignity and autonomy of people living with mental illness or psychological distress
- ensure people are involved in decisions about their treatment, care and support
- recognise the role of families, carers and supporters
- ensure the service system responds to the diverse needs and preferences of Victorians.

In short, it places people at the centre of care.

Action:

Passed the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* (effective from 1 September 2023)

Benefit: More contemporary legislation that facilitates a diverse, responsive and compassionate mental health and wellbeing system for all Victorians.

Action:

Legislated the role of a Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Benefit: The legislated role elevates the status of mental health and wellbeing within the Department of Health, provides strategic direction and strengthens leadership of the mental health and wellbeing system.

Action:

Established the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Benefit: The centre brings together lived experience leadership, advocate for policy change, innovative service delivery and cutting-edge mental health research to drive change to Victoria’s mental health and wellbeing system, so people get the support they need and deserve.

Action:

Established opt-out non-legal advocacy to support people:

- receive compulsory treatment
- with expanded access to legal representation for consumers who appear before the Mental Health Tribunal

Benefit: Trained advocates support people to make informed decisions about their assessment, treatment and recovery, so they can understand and exercise their rights.

Improved access to legal representation for consumers who appear before the Mental Health Tribunal, particularly when consecutive compulsory treatment orders in the community are being sought.

Action:

Established the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

Benefit: An independent statutory authority that holds government to account for the performance, quality and safety of Victoria’s mental health and wellbeing system.

Strengthening cultural safety for Aboriginal communities

We have much to learn from Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing. First Peoples communities have the expertise to shape the support needed for their social and emotional wellbeing.

Strengthened cultural safety for Aboriginal communities is about building respectful and inclusive services and upholding self-determination.

It's about acknowledging that the physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of health and wellbeing are interconnected. It centres on recognising the need to shift from a medical model towards a holistic mental health and wellbeing model.

It involves partnering with key organisations like the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) towards our shared goals for the mental health and wellbeing system.

The *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* advances the recognition and rights of First Nations Victorians through the inclusion of a Statement of Recognition of Aboriginal people and acknowledgement of the Treaty process. The Statement enshrines commitments to Aboriginal self-determination in Victorian Government health statutes for the first time. The Victorian Government acknowledges that more work needs to be done to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and is committed to finding pathways to empower communities with the authority and resources to lead their health and wellbeing efforts, with the aim of having Aboriginal health in Aboriginal hands.

Action:

Invested \$1.2 million to co-design two Aboriginal healing centres

Benefit: Aboriginal Victorians receive culturally safe, responsive and trauma informed social and emotional wellbeing support, recognising the importance of healing and having dedicated spaces for it.

Action:

Funded Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing teams

Benefit: Culturally responsive services and a strong and supported Aboriginal workforce, ensuring that people can easily access and move between services when needed.

Action:

Established the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre for Excellence, the Balit Durn Durn Centre

Benefit: Balit Durn Durn – which means strong brain, mind, intellect and sense of self in Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung language – aims to provide an overview of Aboriginal Communities' experience with the current mental health system and offers innovative Aboriginal-led solutions to inform outcomes. It ensures there is 'no wrong door' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking a culturally safe Social and Emotional Wellbeing service.



The next phase of reform



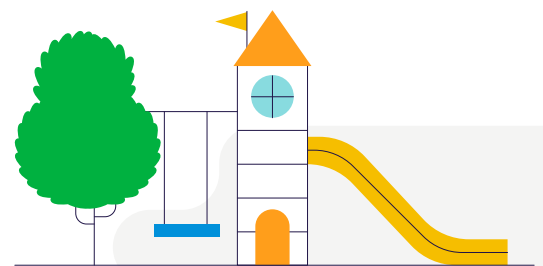
The next phase will build upon what we have achieved so far.

We will have a greater focus on prevention, promotion and early intervention so that more care is being delivered in the community, closer to home.

Developed through extensive consultation with sector partners, this plan will deliver sustainable and person-centred care by enhancing service delivery, strengthening our workforce, promoting mental health and wellbeing, and ensuring inclusivity and equity.

It is a roadmap, so it doesn't include every step and activity. Instead, it clearly signals our priorities and the direction we are taking in this next stage of reform. Future budget cycles will shape and guide the ongoing evolution of this plan.

Together, we are making strides towards a healthier future, with one goal in mind: make Victorians the healthiest people in the world.



Our Vision

A mental health and wellbeing system that delivers inclusive, personalised, compassionate, integrated care so all Victorians are supported to live and experience the life they want.

Consumers



Have choice and agency and access to high-quality and holistic care, as well as leadership roles



Carers, families, supporters and kin



Are recognised, respected, and supported, including in leadership roles



Aboriginal communities



Self-determination and cultural safety are upheld, and physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of wellbeing are central and interconnected



Diverse communities



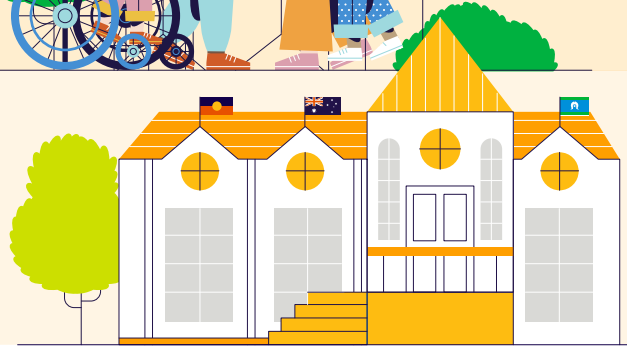
Are reflected and embraced in our services and models of care



Workforces



Are diverse, multidisciplinary, and collaborative, and feel safe, valued and supported



What we heard through the first phase of reform

As we came to the end of the first phase of reform, the Victorian Government sought feedback from the mental health and wellbeing sector on progress of the reforms and future priorities.

More than 500 participants registered for sector forums that were held in 2023.

This is what we heard.



We need to find the right balance for the pace of reform - there is a need to prioritise reforms and build the workforce

What we're doing

- We have reconsidered the pace of change in the mental health and wellbeing system to find a balance
- This Reform Plan provides clear guidance on how we will prioritise and sequence our efforts over the future of our reform journey
- We will work in partnership with the sector to ensure everyone is supported, the pace is sustainable, and actions are helping us move towards the future of Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system
- We will have a key focus on building the workforce pipeline to deliver on new and enhanced services

Benefits

- Slowing the pace increases collaboration by giving stakeholders more time to engage in reforms where appropriate/required
- Opportunity for greater diversity of voices in reform design
- Focus on 'what's most important now'



“

Reassuring to hear the department is reconsidering the pace. The first 12 months there was non-stop requests of input from different teams with very quick turnaround and this was incredibly difficult to manage. It's reassuring to know you heard us on this.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

“

The pace of the reform has been fast, but if you take the foot off the accelerator, the pace stops and then people focus on other things, and you don't want that.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

“

Communicate better about the priority areas and what is upcoming, so we have more notice. Flag more clearly where things are moving to.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

We need to focus on prevention and early intervention

What we're doing

- Focusing on promoting mental health and wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, including through the Statewide Wellbeing Strategy and the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Blueprint
- Working to prevent suicide and the onset of suicidal distress, including launching the Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy
- Promoting mental health and wellbeing through the delivery of the Social Inclusion Action Groups in both metropolitan and regional Victoria to drive local social connection and inclusion

Benefits

- Reduction of discrimination and stigma related to people with diverse backgrounds, identities and attributes
- Safe, inclusive and responsive mental health services for people from diverse communities
- A holistic approach to suicide prevention and response that looks at targeted systems that can influence, and protect against, suicide
- Reduced loneliness and social isolation, which reduces the risks of mental ill health



“

Include prevention, which is bigger than its word, it encompasses everything. We aren't going to get the reforms right if we don't think about people's human rights, e.g., social determinants approach.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

“

More early intervention and prevention in order to prevent them from needing to use Locals.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023



A strong and capable workforce that reflects our community is a key enabler to reform

What we're doing

- Continuing to implement actions from Victoria's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024*
- Addressing regional workforce needs, including through the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentives program
- Delivering an Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship Program

Benefits

- Breadth of expertise and experience across the workforce is acknowledged and valued
- More skilled workers in state funded mental health and alcohol and other drug services in rural and regional Victoria
- An Aboriginal-led mental health workforce that can provide culturally safe mental health care for Aboriginal Victorians



Mental health reform was never going to be a quick fix. Growing the workforce, changing the culture of practice, and embedding new services into the community will take time. All of us, clinicians, consumers, carers, and services need to commit equally to long term change and support one another through this process."

– Mental health clinician, April 2024



Fostering a sense of belonging, especially for the bicultural workforce."

– Diverse Communities Working Group, April 2023



Lived and living experience is a strength that we should build on

What we're doing

- Continuing to support and grow the lived and living experience workforce
- Embedding lived and living experience leadership in services
- Partnering with lived and living experiences in system planning and delivery

Benefits

- Lived and living experience voices are integral to service delivery and decision-making at a service level
- Improved consumer experience of treatment, care and support
- More compassionate care
- Consumers, carers, families, and supporters are placed at the centre of care



We need people (diverse communities and lived experience workers) who are underrepresented in the mental health sector to be given capacity building pathways to provide them with the opportunities to fill in leadership roles."

– Sector forum participant, May 2023



Acknowledging the role LLE has played in the sector for a long time is finally being respected – with greater changes ahead."

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

We need to work towards a more collaborative system

What we're doing

- We are delivering better, integrated services
- We're designing collaborative models for integrated delivery of community-based mental health and wellbeing services with NGO providers of wellbeing supports
- We have established the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing to bring together lived experience leadership and innovative service delivery to drive system transformation

Benefits

- People receive mental health and wellbeing support when, where and how they may want it
- The treatment, care and support provided to consumers is more holistic and person centred
- The Victorian Collaborative Centre will act as a leader in progressing service innovation and evidence-based service delivery

“

More time spent on developing collaboration and partnerships, to navigate nuances and cultural differences – to achieve better outcomes through better service provision, culture, and workforce. Partnerships take time to establish.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

“

We need to be collaborative...”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023



A shared vision will guide us through reform

What we're doing

- We've developed Our Vision (see page 31) that reflects input from the sector, recognising the importance of diverse voices that are fundamental to system transformation
- Our Vision will guide the sector towards shared goals, describing where we are heading through this reform phase
- The Royal Commission has provided a clear vision for a future Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing system

Benefits

- Unified goals across different parts of the sector
- Clarity on where we are heading from the perspective of key stakeholder groups

“

[We] need an agreed vision and direction and implementation for all system and roadmap for sequencing, what's available doesn't go to granular level that needed to understand what is planned.”

– Sector forum participant, May 2023

“

Success is establishing strong foundations so that effective and efficient implementation and rollout can be measured.”

– Sector stakeholder



Priority:

Focusing on prevention and promotion

Good wellbeing contributes to better relationships, better physical health, greater productivity, longer life expectancy and connected communities.

It is important that the spaces where we spend our time are safe, inclusive and welcoming for everyone. This requires change within and beyond the health system. Promotion and prevention are a collective responsibility.

This priority aims to increase emphasis on prevention, promotion and community-based early intervention to contribute to a system-wide shift away from crisis and acute services.

Focus:

Preventing suicide and the onset of suicidal distress

With an aim to reduce the incidence and impact of suicide in Victoria, these initiatives will be delivered in partnership with people with lived and living experience of suicide, communities and other parts of governments.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Launch Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy

2024-2027

Mental Health Improvement Program and adopting the Zero Suicide Framework to improve safety for all

2024-2025

LGBTIQA+ Aftercare service: Co-design model of care; support delivery of interim service

Statewide peer call-back service: Co-design model of care; support delivery of interim service

Distress Brief Support: Commission providers and establish program

2025-2027

Implement Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy

2025-2027

Continued implementation of Distress Brief Support trial

2024-2027

Further programs facilitating suicide prevention and response, including postvention bereavement, Standby Support After Suicide, and gatekeeper and workforce training programs

Focus:

Promoting mental health and wellbeing

The wellbeing program of work aims to strengthen communities and systems that support people to stay well in their communities. It works to remove structural barriers to wellbeing and towards health equity, promoting inclusion and reducing discrimination.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Launch Statewide Wellbeing Strategy

2024-2026

Implement the Victorian Eating Disorders Strategy (first implementation plan)

2024-2025

Continue existing social prescribing trials with the first six Local Services and undertake an evaluation

2025-2026

The Mental Health in Primary Schools program (MHiPS) is expanding across Victoria from 2023 to every government and low-fee non-government primary school by 2026

2024-2025

Supporting mental health and wellbeing in Victorian Schools by providing all government schools with the Schools Mental Health Fund to select programs from an evidence-based menu of mental health and wellbeing supports

2025-2027

Implement Statewide Wellbeing Strategy

2024-2025

Delivery of the first 10 Social Inclusion Action Groups



Focus:

Promoting First Peoples Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Prioritise self-determination and cultural safety, while providing tailored services and care models to meet their unique needs.

Key initiatives:

2024-2027

Growing the Aboriginal workforce

2024-2027

Partnering with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) on social and emotional wellbeing expansion

Focus:

Diversity and inclusion

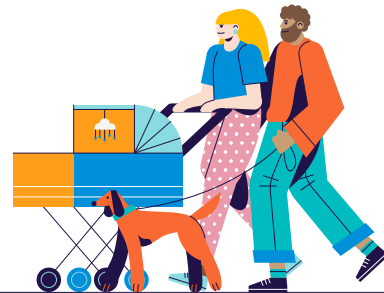
The diversity and inclusion work, underpinned by a framework and blueprint, has been designed to reform our mental health and wellbeing system so it caters for everyone and has equity embedded within it.

Key initiatives:



2024-2025

Launch Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Blueprint



2024-2025

Continue to deliver Switchboard Victoria's specialised LGBTIQ+ helpline, Rainbow Door

2024-2025

Continued delivery of two-year Diverse Communities grants program with community-led organisations

2025-2026

Implement the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework and Blueprint



Priority:

Growing strong, safe and supported workforces

Supporting a workforce who are skilled in delivering mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support using a compassionate, empathetic and dedicated approach across all disciplines and settings.

We need a workforce that is built to support Victorians whether they are experiencing mental health challenges for the first time or dealing with long-term mental illness or psychological distress.

This priority focuses on ensuring the workforce pipeline meets the needs of the reformed service system, including regional communities and a shift towards multidisciplinary teams. It also focuses on continued workforce growth and diversification, as well as building capability and improving retention that is aligned with service reform.

Focus:

Growing the workforce

A focus on growing the workforce so that Victoria's expanded mental health and wellbeing services are delivered through a diverse, multidisciplinary workforce of the right size and composition.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Continued implementation of funded lived and living experience workforce programs

2024-2025

Deliver the Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship Program

2024-2025

Continue to grow the workforce in rural and regional areas through the Regional Mental Health Workforce Incentive Program

2024-2027

Early Career program helping to establish a pipeline of future skilled workers for Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals

2025-2026

Programs and priorities to grow the mental health and wellbeing workforce, aligned to *Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce strategy 2021-2024* and the *Lived and living experience leadership strategy*

2025-2026

Establish a refreshed 12-month Strategic Action Plan for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy

2025-2027

Continue to deliver the Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship Program, under the Balit Murrup Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework

Focus:

Safety and wellbeing

A focus on better data collection, improved governance and accountability for workforce wellbeing and expanded wellbeing supports.

Key initiatives:

2024-2027

Continue ongoing monitoring of workforce safety and wellbeing

2025-2027

Implementation of industry trials by WorkSafe to create more mentally healthy workplaces, for completion in 2028

2024-2027

Continue to provide improved supports to build worker safety and wellbeing



Focus:

Workforce capability

A focus on growing the workforce capability for the current and future system.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Sector engagement activities to establish local implementation teams across Victoria under the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework

2025-2027

Continued implementation of programs under the Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework, *Our workforce, Our future*, in partnership with the sector

2024-2025

Design workforce capability function of the Victorian Collaborative Centre

2025-2027

Implement the workforce capability function of the Victorian Collaborative Centre

2024-2025

Invest \$15.8 million to expand the workforce with a graduate program to establish a pipeline of future skilled workers for our Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals



Priority:

Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level

People with lived and living experience have unique and pivotal insights on what works and does not work in the mental health and wellbeing system.

Their calls for a more accessible, humane and holistic system must have an enduring influence on reform.

To achieve this, we need lived experience leaders at all levels with lived experience workforce and lived experience led services fully embedded in the sector. This emerging workforce needs to reflect the full diversity of communities across Victoria.

Focus:

Lived experience leadership, workforce & services

The focus will be on the development and provision of specific services, initiatives and entities led by and for people with lived experience.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Deliver a *Lived and Living experience leadership strategy*

2025-2027

Develop and implement delivery model for lived experience residential service (The Healing Place)

2024-2025

Continue working with lived experience partners to prepare for establishment of the lived experience residential service (The Healing Place).

2025-2027

Strengthen capacity and capability of lived experience leadership and workforce

2025-2026

Continue work to establish the Lived Experience Agency with partners



Focus:

Lived and living experience supports

The focus will be on the provision of specific supports for people with lived experience.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Continue to refine and support extension of legal advocacy and new opt-out non-legal advocacy to support consumer rights

2024-2027

Continued service content updates on existing online platform to support lived experience navigation of the system, ahead of website development

2025-2027

Continue work on developing and embedding referral pathways for young carers in mental health and wellbeing services





Priority:

Delivering new and better services

This priority focuses on moving the system towards community-based service models, improving options for consumers, families, carers and supporters to fill service gaps for the 'missing middle' and enhanced service offerings for those with more complex and enduring needs; allowing new features of the system to begin to take hold.

The future system will offer different services and pathways for consumers and families. Existing and new providers will redesign what they offer in line with the key goals of connection, inclusivity and local accessibility.

Focus:

Service rollout

Work to deliver and evaluate Local Services will be prioritised. This work is connected to core system re-design and requires strategic support for market creation and infrastructure planning to help the commissioning of service partners.



Key initiatives:

2024-2025

15 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals Services operational and accepting walk-ins

2024-2025

Children's Health and Wellbeing Locals Services continuing to increase service capacity

2024-2025

Design of Transforming Trauma Victoria, a new statewide trauma service

2024-2025

Led by VACCHO, co-design the establishment of two healing centres and a family-oriented service for infants and children

2024-2025

Continue delivery of Mental Health Hospital in the Home programs, as part of adult and youth bed-based reform



2024-2026

Building an Alcohol and Other Drug residential rehabilitation centre in Mildura

2024-2027

Allocate funding and deliver projects through the Mental Health Capital Renewal Fund 2024-2025 and continue delivery of projects funded through previous rounds

2024-2027

Work with Forensicare to continue expansion of forensic care community model and establishment of new regional forensic mental health teams

2024-ongoing

Delivering more mental health acute beds in Shepparton and undertaking planning for further regional beds

2024-ongoing

Building Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Emergency Department Hubs as part of the Ballarat Base, Frankston and Footscray Hospital projects

2025-2027

Support the Local Services model to mature, progress system-wide reforms and plan for future locations, delivering mental health and wellbeing care closer to home

2025-2027

Continued design and planning for the new Victorian statewide trauma service, to provide specialist trauma informed services and bolster trauma-informed practice across the mental health and wellbeing system

2025-2027

Design and planning for bed-based reforms in Area Services

2025-2027

Evaluation of the service model, system integration and benefits for families, carers, supporters and consumers, for Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect centres

2025-2027

Expand social and emotional wellbeing teams through Victoria supported by the Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre of Excellence, the Balit Durn Durn Centre

2026-2027

Commence design and implementation of a service capability framework

Focus:

Supporting mental health and wellbeing of young people

A primary focus is to support young people’s mental health and wellbeing across community, hospital and residential settings. This includes infants and children aged 0-11, their families, and young people aged 12-25.



Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Identify integration and referral pathways between Infant Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services and headspace services

2024-2026

Deliver new YPARC centres in Shepparton, Ballarat, Geelong, Heidelberg and Traralgon and we are upgrading existing YPARC centres in Bendigo, Dandenong and Frankston

2024-2025

Mapping of existing arrangements between Area Services and headspace services for integration

2024-2026

Strengthen the role that headspace centres play as Youth Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services in the reformed youth mental health system

2024-2025

Completion of the disaggregation of the North-West cluster, including establishing the Parkville Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

2024-2027

Continued implementation and support for three Children’s Health and Wellbeing Locals

2024-2027

Phased implementation of infant, child and youth age streaming with Area Mental Health and Wellbeing service providers



Focus:

Mental health crisis response reforms

Critical work to improve services for people experiencing a mental health crisis, including crisis supports, telephone-based crisis response and community outreach, establishment of new drop-in centres (safe spaces), and a shift towards a health-led crisis response model.

Key initiatives:

2025-2027

Continued design and phased implementation of enhanced mental health crisis responses

2025-2027

Design of youth and adult safe spaces for people experiencing mental health crisis

Focus:

System redesign

The system redesign will focus on working in partnership with service providers and people with lived and living experience to develop and implement consistent, holistic and multi-disciplinary services and clarify the roles and responsibilities of different actors across the system.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Continued collaboration with the Hamilton Centre on integrated mental health and alcohol and other drug care

2024-2026

Redesign community mental health and wellbeing services to make them more holistic and to improve consistency across the state

2024-2026

Design a collaborative partnership model between Area Services and NGO providers of wellbeing supports to enable integrated delivery of community-based mental health and wellbeing services



2024-2025

Continue to deliver existing statewide services

2025-2027

Phased implementation of the new access policy with Area and Local Mental Health and Wellbeing providers

2025-2026

Phased implementation of enhanced suite of service expectations for community mental health and wellbeing services to be delivered through the NGO partnership model

2025-2027

Embed diversity and inclusion program in Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals and Area Services

2025-2027

Continued design and phased implementation of the NGO partnership model

2025-2027

Develop and finalise a capability framework that articulates the minimum requirements for consumers presenting to emergency departments or urgent care centres, including consumers experiencing a mental health crisis

2025-2027

Work with mental health and wellbeing services and alcohol and other drug services to deliver integrated care and support





Priority:
Providing more support to the system

This priority seeks to support services to learn and improve so that all Victorians can access high quality care through reformed quality and safety architecture.

It prioritises addressing immediate issues while preparing for improved performance management and system stewardship, ensuring that we have the legal foundations and funding reforms in place to support services.

Focus:

Funding and performance management system

Working together with the sector to identify the implications and transition needs for future funding arrangements.



Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Implement activity-based funding models for admitted services

2025-2026

Continue refining policies, standards and protocols for collecting and sharing mental health information

2024-2025

Progress implementation of a Mental Health Information Sharing Framework

2025-2027

Continue transition to activity-based funding and explore further funding reforms

2024-2025

Implement the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Performance Framework* and deliver baseline report

2025-2027

Implementation of the new *Outcomes and Performance Framework*, including further development of measurement and reporting products

2024-2027

Continue developing and implementing key deliverables for the new information communication technology architecture for the mental health and wellbeing system, ensuring information can be shared between service providers

Focus:

Regional governance and supporting complex care

Improving collaboration and accountability through improved regional governance and the establishment of multiagency panels to support complex care.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Finalise work programs of the Interim Regional Bodies

2024-2027

Planning for future regional governance arrangements

2024-2025

Design and planning for mental health multiagency panels

2025-2027

Establishment of multiagency panels

Focus:

System planning

Ensuring statewide system planning and regional service planning is informed by what people need, building on the strengths of our communities.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Implementation of the statewide service and capital plan

2024-2026

Removal of rigid service catchments

2025-2027

Development of regional service and capital plans





Priority:
Driving cultural change

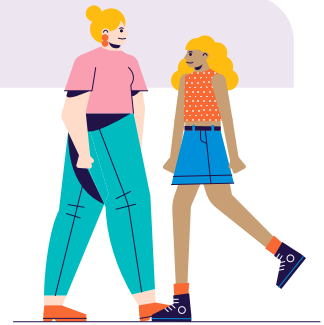
The *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* is the cornerstone of a redesigned mental health and wellbeing system. New system leadership and accountability and a rights-based approach will guide service providers and decision-makers to deliver better and more consumer-focused mental

health and wellbeing treatment, care and support. Services have committed to the practical changes the Act requires, as well as building on the enabling foundations for cultural change.

Focus:

Quality and safety

The Act includes a range of new expectations, requirements and functions ranging from standing up a new oversight body (Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission), to an independent review of compulsory treatment and work to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in bed-based service settings.



Key initiatives:

2024-2025

The Mental Health Improvement Program, Improving Sexual Safety Initiative, led by Safer Care Victoria, will work with mental health inpatient units to build evidence to improve sexual safety within inpatient units

2024-2025

Provide support for the operations of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, including its focus on holding the government to account for the performance, quality and safety of Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system

2024-2025

Co-design of Aboriginal-led approach to suicide prevention and response, led by the Balit Durn-Durn Centre

2024-2026

Transform mental health infrastructure to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in mental health settings through gender-based separation in intensive care areas

2024-2027

Support mental health workforce safety reform to identify and address physical safety and wellbeing issues and risks in the mental health and wellbeing system

2024-2027

Through education and training, raise awareness of the new objectives and principles of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022* to help people feel safer in the mental health and wellbeing system, including cultural safety and safety for people from diverse backgrounds

2024-2027

Seclusion and restraint strategy finalised for implementation and targets set for the reduction and elimination of restrictive interventions by the Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing

2024-2027

The Mental Health Improvement Program will reduce the use and duration of compulsory treatment by collaborating with clinical and non-clinical community teams, incorporating consumer voices, and enhancing the application of safeguards in the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*



2024-2027

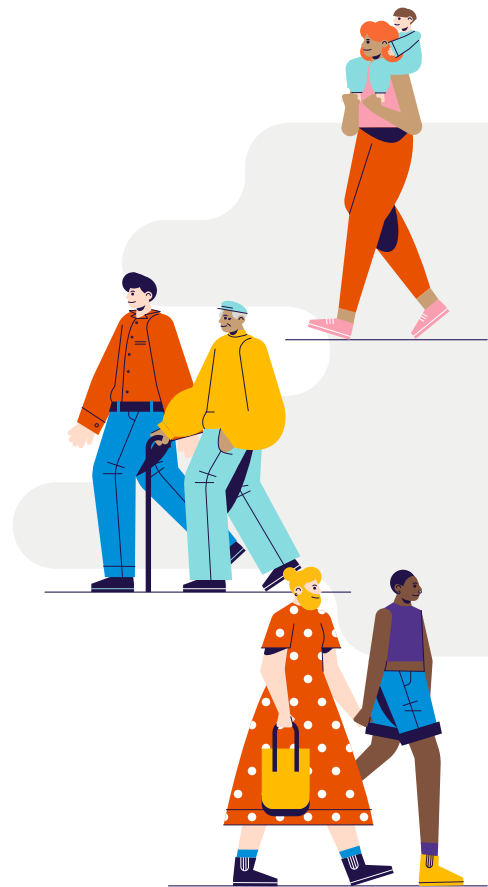
Establish and maintain new system quality and safety architecture across the Chief Mental Health Nurse, Chief Psychiatrist, the Department of Health and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission, and mental health and wellbeing service providers

2025-2027

Implementation of reforms to reduce compulsory treatment through guidance, guidelines, training and driving culture change

2025-2027

Continued Aboriginal leadership, empowerment and collaboration to help strengthen mental health and AOD service systems



Focus:

Implementing the Act

The program will focus on supporting the mental health and wellbeing sector and key workforces to understand their obligations and responsibilities under the Act to help deliver services consistent with its objectives and principles.

Key initiatives:

2024-2025

Compulsory treatment criteria and alignment of decision-making laws: provide response to Engage Victoria consultation and final report based on work of independent review panel

2024-2027

Ongoing implementation of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*, including engagement with the mental health and wellbeing sector, peak bodies and other partners

2024-2027

Support consumer rights and advocacy by embedding and raising awareness of strengthened rights-based principles and complaint processes across the new system and mechanisms for supported decision-making for people receiving compulsory treatment

2024-2027


Support the Victorian Collaborative Centre to operate and evolve



2024-2027



The Victorian Collaborative Centre will work to promote and improve evaluation practices throughout the mental health and wellbeing system by issuing guidance and facilitating access to evaluation expertise



Appendix – initiatives table

Priority area	Initiative	Recs
 <p>Focusing on prevention and promotion</p>	Statewide Wellbeing Strategy	2
	Suicide prevention and response strategy	26.2b
	Statewide peer call-back service	31.2
	Distress Brief Support	27.3
	LGBTIQA+ Aftercare Service	27.2a
	Postvention bereavement support	27.2b
	Gatekeeper training	27.1b, 27.1c
	Diverse Communities Blueprint and Framework	34.1, 34.3a, 34.3b
	Social Inclusion Action Groups (SIAGS)	15.1, 15.2, 15.3
	Delivering the Diverse Communities Grants Program	34.4
	Rainbow Door	34.4
	Social prescribing trials	15.4
	Growing the Aboriginal mental health workforce	IR 4
	Partnering with VACCHO; and establishment and expansion of social and emotional wellbeing teams.	33.1, 33.4, IR4
 <p>Growing strong, safe and supported workforces</p>	Growing the workforce	IR 7, 36.2, 36.3, 57, 58
	Growing the lived and living experience workforce	IR 6.1, IR 6.2, IR 6.3, IR 6.4
	Addressing regional workforce needs	40, 39.1a
	Aboriginal Mental Health Traineeship Program	IR 4
	Workforce strategy	57
	Workforce safety and wellbeing	59.1, 59.2, 59.3
	Mentally health workplaces	16
	Workforce capability	58

Priority area	Initiative	Recs
 <p>Supporting a system that embeds lived experience leadership at every level</p>	Lived and Living Experience Leadership	28.1, 30.1
	Lived Experience Residential Service (The Healing Place)	IR 5
	Lived Experience Agency	29
	Lived Experience Website	6.4
	Legal and non-legal advocacy	56.2, 56.3
	Supports for Young Carers	32.1, 32.2, 32.3
 <p>Delivering new and better services</p>	Aboriginal Healing Centres and the co-design of the NEST Framework model	33.1, 33.4
	Community redesign (NGO Partnerships)	3.2b, 3.2c
	Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug integration	35.1a, 35.1b, 36.2
	Youth bed-based reforms	21.1, 21.3
	Infant, Children and Youth Aboriginal Services	33.2, 33.3
	Infant, Child and Youth age streaming	19.1, 19.2, 20.1, 20.2
	Meeting the needs of diverse communities in Locals and Areas	5.3
	Emergency Department service capability framework	8.3a, 8.3b
	Access Policy and Intake Guidelines	6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 7
	Headspace integration	20.3, 20.4
	Accessible statewide services	3.2d
	Service capability framework	3.5
	Health-led crisis response	10
	Crisis system, entry to respite	8, 9
	New Mental Health and Wellbeing Local Services (Adult & Older Adult)	3.2a
	Infant, Child and Family Locals	19.3
	Adult forensic	37.2
	Transforming Trauma Victoria	23, 24
	Balit Durn Durn Centre	33.1
	Expansion and reform of adult bed-based services	IR 2, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3

Priority area	Initiative	Recs
 <p>Providing more support to the system</p>	Statewide service and capital plan	3.3, 3.4, 47.2, 47.3
	Funding reform	48.3
	Information capture and sharing	61.1, 61.2, 61.3, 30.4
	Contemporary Information and Communication Technology	62, 60
	Outcomes Framework and Performance design and implementation	1
	North West Disaggregation	Chapter 5.6
	Regional governance	4
	Regional service and capital plans	3.3, 3.4, 47.2, 47.4
	Establishing multiagency panels across regions	4.5
	Removal of rigid service catchments	3.3, 3.4
 <p>Driving cultural change</p>	Supporting consumer rights and advocacy	56.1, 56.2, 56.3
	Mental Health and Wellbeing Act Implementation	42.1, 42.2, 34.2
	Victorian Collaborative Centre	IR 1, 63
	Review of compulsory treatment criteria and alignment of decision-making laws	43, 56.4
	A focus on system safety	52
	A focus on gender and sexual safety	13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4
	The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission	44.1, 44.2, 30.2, 41.1, 53, 28.2
	Towards eliminating seclusion and restraint	54.1, 54.2, 54.3, 54.4
	Reducing compulsory treatment	55.1, 55.2, 55.3, 55.4
	Quality and safety system architecture	52, 53