



## Major mental health investment a critical step towards large-scale system reform

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Mental Health Victoria welcomes the \$868 million in additional mental health investment announced today by the Victorian Government, which will ensure the state can implement the interim recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said the announcement of the new mental health funding to be included in the upcoming State Budget will come as a relief for many who were concerned that the mental health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may impede the reform implementation process.

"As Mental Health Minister James Merlino said today, Victoria is dealing with the 'twin wicked challenge' of a broken mental health system and the impact of a global pandemic, so this level of investment and commitment comes at a critical time," Mr Clelland said.

"The Victorian Government has today made good on its commitment to deliver ongoing reform implementation and to make a down-payment on the much larger reform program to come with the Royal Commission's final report in February 2021," he said.

The Budget invests \$21.4 million to complete the state-wide expansion of the Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) service, which provides support to the person involved and their carers and families to identify and build the protective factors that reduce the risk of suicide and/or repeated intentional self-harm.

"People who have been hospitalised after a suicide attempt remain at risk after leaving hospital, so universal access to post discharge support is a critical part of the state's suicide prevention strategy. This service will save lives," Mr Clelland said.

Mental Health Victoria also welcomes \$2.2 million funding to help design the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, which will bring together the experts on our mental health system – particularly those with lived experience.

"The centre, which was one of Mental Health Victoria's recommendations to the Royal Commission, is a key building block in the mental health system of the future and will help Victoria become a national and international leader in mental health service design and delivery," Mr Clelland said.



The Budget also includes \$8.7 million to establish a residential mental health service, specifically designed and delivered by those with lived experience.

“While we also welcome the boost in funding in the Budget for acute hospital-based care, the time has come for investment in innovative community-based residential care as a critical alternative, modelled on New Zealand’s acclaimed example,” he said.

The \$492 million provided to deliver 120 mental health beds in addition to the 24 ‘Hospital in the Home’ beds announced earlier this year, will help ease bed supply and emergency department pressures in the short term, as will the rapid procurement of 35 beds from private hospitals.

These are important measures while large scale investment in community-based mental healthcare gets underway, noting that this year’s budget includes an additional 19,000 hours of community-based support.

“Longer term, investment in community-based mental healthcare will reduce demand on the hospital system by keeping people safe, well and supported in the community,” Mr Clelland said.

“We expect that the Royal Commission’s final report will articulate a new model for community mental health and we urge that the 2021 Budget be weighted accordingly to recognise the critical role of community-based mental health services and their impact on reducing Emergency Department presentations and in-patient service demand,” he said.

The budget includes \$47.8 million for early intervention support for young people as well as \$7 million to support critical research into youth mental health and operations at the Orygen centre.

“Early intervention is vital for the mental health and wellbeing trajectory of young people. This is a much needed investment,” Mr Clelland said.

Other welcome measures in the funding package include additional training opportunities to support students and job seekers looking to pursue a career in the mental health sector.

“Today’s announcement comes on top of yesterday’s \$235 million Recovery Workforce program which will create 500 new jobs across mental health, family violence, health and child protection, addressing some critical workforce shortages across the state.”

*For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call Danielle McLeod on 0438 998 043.*