



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **History in the making: Mental Health Victoria welcomes confirmation of Royal Commission report release date**

18 February 2021

Mental Health Victoria welcomes the announcement today of the public release date for the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system and urges the Federal Government to make its own historic commitment to mental health in the May budget.

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said the release of the Royal Commission's final report during an historic joint sitting of both houses of the Victorian Parliament will be the most significant development in mental health since de-institutionalisation in the 1990s. It will be the culmination of more than two decades of outstanding advocacy efforts from individuals, carers, families, academics, and mental health professionals from across Victoria.

"While we would love to have a copy of the final report in our hands right now, given the document's historic significance we support its release at a special joint sitting of the Victorian Parliament on 2 March."

"The short delay of the report's release will not have any impact on the reform timeline. We recognise that, on recommendation from the Royal Commission, the Victorian Government commenced work on interim report recommendations a year ago. This will give us a head start.

"We commend the Victorian Government for calling the Royal Commission, committing to implementing all of its recommendations, and for the large-scale investment it has provided in the interim to help stabilise the system, begin reform activities and respond to the devastating impacts of COVID-19.

"We would like to recognise the Royal Commissioners and staff for their efforts over the past two years. The Commission has demonstrated an outstanding focus on the needs of individuals, carers, families, and communities", he said.

Mr Clelland said that just as people were the focus of the reforms, people will be key to sustaining the new mental health system.

"The reform process will create thousands of new jobs across Victoria and across all mental health disciplines – including peer workers, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists and community workers. Growing the workforce will be a critical early priority," he said.

"The investment in mental health reforms will pay off in other ways, including taking pressure off emergency departments, he said.



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“There is undisputedly a large economic return from investing in mental health in terms of the benefits that flow from supporting people living with mental illness to be safe, well, housed and employed in the community,” he said.

### **Time for historic commitment from the Federal Government**

Mental Health Victoria now calls on the Federal Government to make its own historic investment in mental health reform.

“The Commonwealth and States have joint responsibilities for the mental health system. The May 2021 Budget presents an ideal opportunity for the Commonwealth to commit to the reforms articulated in the Productivity Commission’s final report, the National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Vision 2030,” Mr Clelland said.

“The success of the Victorian reforms will be critically dependent on Commonwealth investment.

“Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on Victorians, we particularly urge the Commonwealth to prioritise retention of the 15 HeadtoHelp health clinics after September 2021 and transition these to fully fledged mental health and wellbeing centres under a fast-tracked National Adult Mental Health Centre program,” Mr Clelland said.

*For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call Clare Callow on 0410 147 988.*