

Martin Foley, Minister for Mental Health

Message to the mental health sector

June 2015

There is a lot happening in mental health and wellbeing policy at both state and Commonwealth levels. The Andrews Labor Government is committed to developing a clear plan for mental health. This will be an important plank in our efforts to re-cast the system to one that places the wellbeing of individuals and communities at the heart of an integrated care system.

I am privileged to be the Minister for Mental Health in Victoria. Our specialist mental health workforce is skilled, passionate and committed to helping Victorians with mental illness, and supporting their families and carers. There are many good things about our specialist mental health services, and there are also a number of opportunities for improvement. This will mean a lot of activity over coming months as we get on with this important work.

The 2015-16 Victorian Budget outcomes for mental health provide us with a foundation for action. Our commitment is to develop a plan that will form the basis of our strategic investment in mental health for the next ten years. This, along with a mental health workforce strategy that is inclusive of peer workers and the tabling of an annual report on Victoria's mental health services, will ensure that mental health remains a high priority for the Victorian Government. Our specialist service system must be able to deliver recovery-oriented, evidence-based treatment and care that supports individuals and their families to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Integrating mental health's central role into the wellbeing of peoples' lives will be our goal.

Your opinions and expertise count and are shaping and informing my decisions about what needs to be done. I urge you to remain involved and continue to engage with the Victorian Government as we face the many challenges ahead together.



Martin Foley MP

1: Review of new arrangements for the delivery of Mental Health Community Support Services and Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services

The Victorian Government made an election commitment to address gaps that may have resulted from the recommissioning of mental health community support services.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns about the impacts of the new arrangements for delivery of these and the adult non-residential drug treatment services following recommissioning in 2014. The Victorian Government shares these concerns where we can see the design of the system is contributing to poorer outcomes.

These concerns span a range of areas including:

- Fragmentation of the system in some locations through the establishment of centralised intake and assessment functions, leading to delays in service access and/or the loss of clients from treatment and support services;
- New assessment processes for drug treatment services resulting in reduced numbers of people accessing treatment;
- Disadvantaged and highly marginalised groups not receiving the support they need; and
- Lack of integration into wider systems of care.

I have decided that an independent review should be undertaken so that we address these issues as we move forward in developing the service system.

The review will include two components:

- Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including service users and their families, peak bodies, service providers and referrers, to assess the current situation, identify strengths and weaknesses, and canvas stakeholder views on potential opportunities for improvement; and
- Analysis of available data to determine current system performance across all 16 catchments for both mental health community support services and adult non-residential drug treatment services.

It is important to note that this review will not involve revisiting the recommissioning process itself. What I am seeking now is advice on what the next steps are to ensure our service system meets the needs of those with severe and persistent mental illness and those with addictions.

This review will be conducted independently by a consultancy with demonstrated experience in working with consumers, carers and service providers, but one that has not been heavily involved with either sector to date. I will advise you shortly of the process through which your feedback will be sought.

I expect that the work will be conducted throughout July, with final documentation submitted to me in August 2015. These timeframes are tight, however they will enable emerging themes and findings to be considered in the development of the Victorian Government's 10 Year Plan for Mental Health and to shape future planning and strategic service development.

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2: National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Update

The Victorian Government is a big supporter of the NDIS and we will work hard to ensure that the roll-out is a success. The NDIS will result in a significant increase in the support available for Victorians living with disability, including those with psychosocial disability as a result of mental illness. The NDIS will be the main vehicle in Victoria for funding and accessing psychosocial disability support services.

Key messages:

- The NDIS, when fully operational, will replace the majority of services currently provided under the state-funded Mental Health Community Support Services program.
- The Victorian Government will not duplicate services intended to be provided through the NDIS.
- What these services will comprise, and who will deliver them, is not yet determined, however, they will build on the strengths of the existing service system in Victoria.
- The Victorian Government is committed to having an integrated community care system which places vulnerable people and communities at its core. The system will aim to complement the NDIS and avoid the creation of service gaps.

We are at a critical stage in negotiations with the Commonwealth and there are significant issues that need urgent attention. The NDIS introduces a ‘market’ approach to the provision of disability and community support services. We are developing safeguards to ensure the markets are well supported. It is crucial that we have well-designed markets that are underpinned by suitable and rigorous safeguards and standards. Overall, the NDIS is expected to be a substantial generator of new employment opportunities but there are big questions still to be answered about how we support existing service providers in the transition to the new scheme, whilst making sure that new providers in Victoria offer high quality service to the maximum number of people.

Although clients using our Mental Health Community Support Services are well positioned for transition to the NDIS, we need to be careful that we are not left with a service gap and that the support needs of Victorians with mental illness, and their families and carers continue to be met.

There is work underway, both with the NDIA and in the Victorian Government, to clarify what will be available through the NDIS psychosocial disability support packages, and what will not. This will help us to understand what support people with mental illness and their families and carers need from the Victorian Government and maximise supports available from the state and the NDIS. You can find out more on the NDIS website: www.ndis.gov.au

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3: 10 Year Plan for Mental Health and the Mental Health Annual Report

The Victorian Government has committed to developing a 10 Year Plan for Mental Health within its first year of office. The expertise and experience of people living with mental illness, their families and friends and service providers will inform the plan.

Work is well underway in developing the purpose and structure of the plan, and the priorities within it. This work is building on the *Because Mental Health Matters* mental health reform strategy launched in 2008 and developed by the former Victorian Labor Government, and on what we have heard and learnt from key stakeholders over the ensuing years. The plan will encompass the specialist treatment system **and** prevention, early intervention, social support and primary care. It will have a focus on integration with wider community care models of service.

In order to address social disadvantage, discrimination, and strengthen individual and community resilience and connectedness, a concerted effort will be required from all levels and multiple arms of government, non-government community services sectors, private hospitals and mental health specialists, employers, schools, families and the Victorian community.

To generate discussion and stakeholder input, issues papers focussed on particular population groups will be released shortly and the Department of Health & Human Services will hold a series of consultations with stakeholder groups to further guide and shape where we should target effort to improve outcomes. You will be advised soon on how to get involved in these consultation opportunities. I look forward to meeting many of you as you participate in this consultation process.

The Victorian Government is committed to bringing a new level of transparency and accountability to the sector. We are delivering on our promise to introduce a Mental Health Annual Report. The report will be tabled in both houses of Parliament, commencing in November 2016. It will be a report on the performance of the mental health service sector in the previous 12 months and monitor progress against the 10 Year Plan for Mental Health. This is a very important step in increasing government accountability and transparency, and in opening up a dialogue with the community about our vision for continuous improvement of public mental health services. The annual report will include information about the provision of public mental health services during each financial year, including key quantitative and qualitative data, such as service usage data and results from consumer surveys. It will bring together important information already reported in a variety of forms, identify trends and themes and highlight priorities for future attention and investment.

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4. Peer Support and Mutual Support and Self Help Programs

The Victorian Government wants to build on the findings of the 2014 review by *Deloitte Access Economics Review* commissioned to evaluate the role of peer support and Mutual Support and Self Help programs. The reviewed programs included Consumer and Carer Consultants, Mutual Support and Self Help, Carer Support, Planned Respite (PDRSS Program) and the Carer Support Fund. The review found that whilst the Peer Support and Mutual Support and Self Help programs have value, they need to be more effectively organised around key functions within a coherent policy framework for consumer and carer support and participation. The evidence tells us that mutual support, self-help, peer and carer support all deliver enormous value in the process of preventing, understanding and managing mental illness.

We will use the findings of the review to inform the development of the 10 Year Plan for Mental Health, that will include the development of a strategy for mutual support, self-help and peer support programs. In recognition of the time that will be required to undertake this task I have assured services that the Victorian Government is committed to continuing existing funding under these programs until the end of the 2015-16 financial year. To inform discussion, I have also asked the department to make the executive summary of the review available on its webpage:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth>

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