



# Putting It All Together

**Royal Commissions, Inquiries, Strategies and Vision  
2030**

**Symposium summary**

**May 2021**

## **Putting It All Together**

This is a momentous year for mental health and wellbeing, with numerous state and national inquiries, reports and strategies providing robust and transformational blueprints for the improvement and reinvention of the mental health system.

As the peak body for mental health in Victoria, Mental Health Victoria (MHV) hosted 'Putting It All Together: Royal Commissions, Inquiries, Strategies and Vision 2030' to bring together those working within and across the mental health sector at this historic and opportune moment in time.

Held on 5 and 17 March, the Symposium brought together over 250 consumers, carers, service providers, peak bodies and government representatives in an online forum to discuss the relevance, culmination and future of these momentous reports.

Day one of the Symposium provided the first opportunity for the sector to examine and respond to final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, released just three days prior.

Day two broadened the scope to reform at the national level, discussing the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Vision 2030.

This summary features the key messages emerging across both days of the Symposium. It highlights commentary from the Symposium's esteemed speakers and panellists as they reflected on the following key developments in mental health and suicide prevention reform.

## **Keeping It All Together**

'Putting It All Together' was the first in MHV's series of symposiums focused on the reform of the mental health system.

Don't forget to register for the next Symposium in the series, 'Preparing for reform: Co-production, culture change and leadership' on 29 June 2021.

## The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

The Royal Commission's [Final Report](#) represents the most comprehensive analysis of Victoria's mental health system ever undertaken. To repair what Premier Daniel Andrews conceded was a "broken" system, it has added 65 recommendations for reform to the nine identified in the [Interim Report](#), released in November 2019.

True to the Premier's commitment in 2018, all 74 recommendations are to be implemented, with most to be completed by 2026. Once implemented, these reforms will fundamentally transform the way that mental health and wellbeing services are designed and delivered across Victoria. The transformation will improve outcomes for individuals, families, carers and communities.

Symposium speakers responded to the report with optimism and a healthy degree of caution, with some panellists identifying areas that deserved more attention. Key themes from the day's panels included:

- the placing of people with lived experience at the centre of the reformed system
- the imperative of authentic collaboration to implement reform recommendations
- the importance of embedding evaluation and continuous improvement into the system at a fundamental level
- the urgent need for funding to address chronic under-resourcing
- concerns around some areas which may require more attention, including consumer leadership and the needs of diverse groups.

*"There is a degree of trepidation – of hope, certainly, but some doubt ... the proof is in the pudding. I want your expectations to be high. I want you to hold ourselves and the government responsible."*

– The Hon James Merlino MP

*"In the Royal Commission's report, we have a blueprint to implement the missing pieces ... the key pillars of mental health care."*

– Prof Patrick McGorry AO, Executive Director, Orygen

*"Real collaboration occurs when we are recognised as key players ... To every consumer in Victoria: you are your own key player."*

– Maggie Toko, CEO  
Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council

*"I'm asking myself and my team 'How does this put people at the centre? Who is at the table?'"*

– Pam Anders, CEO, Mental Health Reform Victoria

*"Overall what the Commission has produced is very thoughtful and responsive in relation to regional Victorian communities."*

*– Leigh Rhode, CEO, Gateway Health*

*"[We must make] spaces to invite people who have been left out."*

*– Dr Kerry Rubin, Chair*

*Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Victorian Branch Committee*

*"We need a cultural change from top to bottom."*

*– Prof Allan Fels AO, Patron, Mental Health Victoria*

*"It is so important to have trauma-informed, culturally safe care."*

*– Jill Gallagher AO, CEO*

*Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation*

*"Diversity, equity and inclusion principles should be an overarching aim ... that's somewhat absent."*

*– Dr Anita Tan, Manager, Victorian Transcultural Mental Health*

*"The needs of trans and gender diverse people are so stark and urgent and there's nowhere in the report that looks at that crisis."*

*– Marina Carman, Director, Rainbow Health Victoria*

*"Systems tend to become rigid when what we need is flexibility."*

*– Gary Croton, Clinical Nurse Consultant and Secretary  
Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative*

*"There is no way to achieve what this document wants without information sharing."*

*– Dr Mya Cubitt, Chair*

*Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Victorian Faculty Board*

*"There is a limit to what we can do without funding."*

*– Dr Melissa Petrakis, Chair, Tandem*

*"We must help each other keep focused on the long game ... Keep the long game in mind, but celebrate the small things."*

*– Laura Collister, CEO, Wellways*

## The Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health

The Productivity Commission's [Inquiry Report into Mental Health](#) is the culmination of one of the most significant national reviews of Australia's mental health system in history. Its comprehensive and holistic vision for reform will be vital to creating a federal foundation capable of turning the fragmented state-based mental health systems we currently have into a cohesive whole that can provide for the mental health needs of all Australians.

Symposium speakers welcomed the Report's vision, the strong economic case made for reform and investment in mental health, and the potential of the recommendations to support the reform agenda being pursued in Victoria. Speakers also acknowledged that there was still some room for improvement, and that payoffs on the 21 recommendations and 103 action areas would not be immediate. In recognition of these challenges, speakers highlighted the need to:

- continue to focus on the costs of mental health and the economic benefits of investment and reform
- carefully consider priorities for action and timing
- collaborate across jurisdictions and portfolios to achieve the report's vision.

*"Mental illness costs Australia around \$43–70 billion a year in lost productivity."*

*– Prof Stephen P King, Presiding Commissioner, Productivity Commission Inquiry*

*"If we spend money, we can save money. We need to focus on this when we come together to create an effective implementation plan."*

*– Katherine Ellis, CEO Youth Affairs Council Victoria*

*"I see this report as a philosophical statement of direction – it's a really good one, a sound one. What comes now is some really hard decisions about the priorities."*

*– Dr Zena Burgess, CEO, Australian Psychological Society*

*"We need a better functioning health or wellbeing system (including promotion, prevention and early intervention) as well as a better functioning mental healthcare system."*

*– Dr Stephen Carbone, Director, Prevention United*

*"If we are serious that everybody in Australia deserves the same level of care, we need to reward people to go out into more remote areas."*

*– Dr James Antoniadis, Chair General Practice and Psychiatry Liaison Committee, The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Victoria*

*"Success will be measured in five or two years' time if we look back and say, 'Oh my God, I can't believe we used to do that!'"*

*– Prof Stephen P King, Presiding Commissioner, Productivity Commission Inquiry*

## Vision 2030 and National Suicide Prevention Strategy

[Vision 2030](#) and the [Final Advice](#) of the National Suicide Prevention Adviser are shaping a nationally consistent approach to mental health and suicide prevention reforms. Together, they provide a critical blueprint for a person-led, community-based and coordinated system that provides accessible and affordable care to anyone who needs it, whenever and wherever they are.

Symposium speakers welcomed both reports, with particular welcome of the efforts of the National Mental Health Commission to meaningfully engage with people with lived experience of mental health issues. The Reports associated with this vital work were welcomed as important opportunities to:

- embed the views and voices of people with lived experience of mental health issues in national mental health and suicide prevention reforms
- ensure consistency between all reform strategies
- coordinate cross-jurisdiction and cross-department action
- ensure everyone is working towards common goals.

*“We need to provide coordinated, navigable, multidisciplinary care for those in Australia when they need it, where they need it and for as long as they need it ... We need to be driven by outcomes not outputs ... We need to amp up the public discussion of suicide ... We need a whole-of-government approach.”*

*– Christine Morgan, CEO, National Mental Health Commission  
National Suicide Prevention Adviser*

*“I am wanting to be hopeful that this will be the pivotal, watershed moment in which the rhetoric of lived experience at the centre will become the reality.”*

*– Ingrid Ozols AM, Chair, Lived Experience Advisory Group, Mental Health Victoria*

*“We must not forget that there are specific issues facing people at different times of life, women compared to men, and different groups in the community.”*

*– Prof Jayashri Kulkarni AM, Women’s Mental Health Alliance*

*“A good way to go is to get Aboriginal services, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people involved with building services, with making decisions.”*

*– Daniel Bolger, Adviser, Lived Experience Advisory Group, Mental Health Victoria*

*“We absolutely must embed lived experience as part of our reform. This is the most critical thing we can hold onto.”*

*– Christine Morgan, CEO, National Mental Health Commission  
National Suicide Prevention Adviser*

*“That shared experience, knowing you’re not alone, there’s nothing like it.”*

*– Ingrid Ozols AM, Chair, Lived Experience Advisory Group, Mental Health Victoria*

## National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The [National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) is the first of its kind, and an exciting commitment to address a traditionally under-served segment of the mental health system. Focusing on children from birth through to 12 years of age and the families and communities that nurture them, the Strategy outlines the need for a transformational shift to a new, shared understanding of the roles of families, communities, services, and educators in promoting and supporting child mental health and wellbeing.

The Strategy was welcomed by Symposium speakers who applauded its holistic and integrated vision. Key themes from the panel's discussion included:

- the need to support the mental health and broader multidisciplinary workforces, including boosting the lived experience workforce
- the importance of improving the consistency and integration of care
- looking beyond the mental health system to improve mental health outcomes.

*"What we're really asking for is a fundamental shift in the way we think about child mental health ... Investing in children is essential ... so they don't end up at age 14 with a lifetime of issues that have gone unaddressed."*

– Prof Frank Oberklaid AM, Director  
Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital

*"I would love to be 'captured' by the system ... There is so much pressure, as a carer, to find a service. It's just exhausting and I would like someone to say, 'What about this?' and 'How are you going today?'"*

– Imbi Pyman, Carer and Lived Experience Adviser, Mental Health Victoria

*"I welcome the focus much earlier in life, early in the course of illness, and the integrated care approach...we need State and Federal Governments to come together and think about funding these approaches ... and we need to explore the peer workforce more."*

– Prof Harriet Hiscock, Director Health Services Research Unit, Royal Children's Hospital

*"There are many aspects of this plan that could be further enhanced by better understanding Aboriginal therapeutic frameworks and the role of culture."*

– Adj Prof Muriel Bamblett AO, CEO, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

*"We're so thankful to see the perinatal period so heavily recognised ... Any point of need in the lifecycle where we can step in and support people is fundamentally important."*

– Julie Borninkhof, CEO Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia

## Bringing it all together

As showcased at the 'Putting it all Together' Symposium, the timely culmination of four seminal reports sets out a path to vastly improve our state and nation's mental health and wellbeing. Collectively, these Royal Commissions, Inquiries, Visions, Reports and Strategies contain hundreds of recommendations. Now, more than ever, is a critical time to work together to ensure our collective vision for mental health and suicide prevention is realised.

Our attention now must turn to making this vision a reality. We can do this by keeping mental health and suicide prevention as clear national priorities for investment, maintaining our focus and momentum on holistic system transformation, and ensuring that we always keep the number one reason for this momentous work – the people whose lives and wellbeing are at stake – at the centre of reform.

*"All of these reports bring together an opportunity to say that lived experience has to be taken seriously – we are part of the solution"*

*– Ingrid Ozols AM, Chair, Lived Experience Advisory Group, Mental Health Victoria*

*"You wouldn't go out and design a car without asking consumers what they want. You cannot design a mental health service without asking consumers and carers what they want – and what they need."*

*– Prof Stephen P King, Presiding Commissioner, Productivity Commission Inquiry*

*"As the Productivity Commission has shown, there is an economic imperative to improve mental health. Spending on mental health and wellbeing is an investment with a clear return."*

*– Prof Allan Fels AO, Patron, Mental Health Victoria*

*"We need state, territory, federal and local governments to work together ... The call today is for mental health to be prioritised at a national level."*

*– Jill Gallagher AO, CEO*

*Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation*

*"We need to keep momentum — all these reports coming in at the same time shows that everybody is concerned that things need to change."*

*– Prof Christel Middeldorp, Conjoint Professor of Child and Youth Psychiatry, Child Health Research Centre & Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service*

*"There's been a long history of mental health reform rising to the top [but then] other priorities displace it ... we have to make sure it remains a priority."*

*– Prof Allan Fels AO, Patron, Mental Health Victoria*

*"If Australia and Victoria do this, it will have an effect on the rest of the world."*

*– Prof Patrick McGorry AO, Executive Director, Orygen*

## Day one: Victorian reforms

9.00 – 9.10 | Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

Angus Clelland, CEO Mental Health Victoria & the Hon James Merlino MP, Deputy Premier, Victorian Minister for Mental Health, Victorian Minister for Education

9.10 – 9.20 | Overview of the day

Sophie Scott, MC, National Medical Reporter ABC

9.20 – 9.50 | Keynote — The Victorian reform agenda

Prof Allan Fels AO, Patron Mental Health Victoria

9.50 – 10.00 | Break

10.00 – 10.25 | Royal Commission Final Report — Service reform and vision

Larissa Taylor, Director of Policy Mental Health Victoria

10.25 – 11.10 | Panel Discussion

Maggie Toko, CEO VMIAC; Dr Melissa Petrakis, Chair Tandem; Jill Gallagher AO, CEO VACCHO; Marina Carman, Director Rainbow Health Victoria

11.10 – 11.20 | Break

11.20 – 11.45 | Royal Commission Final Report: Governance, funding, commissioning

Tom Symondson, CEO VHA Day One, Friday 5 March 2021 Victorian Reforms

11.45–12.30 | Panel Discussion

Dr Kerryn Rubin, Chair RANZCP Victorian Branch Committee; Leigh Rhode, CEO Gateway Health; Dr Mya Cubitt, Chair ACEM Victorian Faculty Board; Gill Callister PSM, CEO Mind Australia

12.30 – 12.50 | Break

12.50 – 13.20 | Keynote: Implementation — What to Expect

Pam Anders, CEO Mental Health Reform Victoria

13.20 – 13.35 | Q&A Session

13.35 – 14.20 | Panel Discussion

Dr Anita Tan, Manager Victorian Transcultural Mental Health; Laura Collister, CEO Wellways; Sue Peden, CEO Carers Victoria; Gary Croton, Secretary Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative; A/Prof Steve Moylan, Clinical Director Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Services, Barwon Health

14.20 – 14.25 | Break

14.25 – 14.55 | Closing Address

Maggie Toko, CEO VMIAC

14.55 – 15.00 | Wrap-up

Sophie Scott, MC, National Medical Reporter ABC

## Day two: National reforms

9.00 – 9.10 | Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

Angus Clelland, CEO Mental Health Victoria & Sophie Scott, MC, National Medical Reporter ABC

9.10 – 9.20 | Opening address

Damian Ferrie, Chair Mental Health Victoria, CEO Star Health

9.20 – 9.30 | Break

9.30 – 10.00 | Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health

Prof Stephen P King, Presiding Commissioner Productivity Commission Inquiry

10.00 – 10.15 | Q&A Session

10.15 – 10.45 | Panel Discussion

Dr James Antoniadis, Chair General Practice and Psychiatry Liaison Committee, RACGP Vic.; Dr Stephen Carbone, Director Prevention United; Dr Zena Burgess, CEO Australian Psychological Society; Katherine Ellis, CEO Youth Affairs Council Victoria

10.45 – 10.55 | Break

10.55 – 11.25 | Vision 2030 and National Suicide Prevention Strategy

Christine Morgan, CEO National Mental Health Commission, National Suicide Prevention Adviser

11.25 – 11.40 | Q&A Session

11.40–12.10 | Panel Discussion

Prof Jayashri Kulkarni AM, Women's Mental Health Alliance; Tina Hogarth-

Clarke, CEO Council on the Ageing Victoria; Ingrid Ozols AM, Chair Lived Experience Advisory Group, MHV; Daniel Bolger, Adviser Lived Experience Adviser, MHV

12.10 – 12.30 | Break

12.30 – 13.00 | National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Prof Christel Middeldorp, Conjoint Professor of Child and Youth Psychiatry, Child Health Research Centre and Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service & Prof Frank Oberklaid AM, Director Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital

13.00 – 13.15 | Q&A Session

13.15 – 13.45 | Panel Discussion

Adj Prof Muriel Bamblett AO, CEO VACCA; Julie Borninkhof, CEO Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia; Prof Harriet Hiscock, Director RCH Health Services Research Unit; Imbi Pyman, Carer and Lived Experience Adviser, MHV

13.45 – 13.50 | Break

13.50 – 14.20 | Bringing it all together

Prof Patrick McGorry AO, Executive Director Orygen

14.20 – 14.25 | Break

14.25 – 14.55 | Closing Address

Jill Gallagher AO, CEO VACCHO

14.55 – 15.00 | Wrap-up

Sophie Scott, MC, National Medical Reporter ABC