

**The Hon Jacinta Allan MP**  
Premier of Victoria

**The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP**  
Minister for Disability

**Ingrid Stiff MP**  
Minister for Mental Health

### **Open Letter about the need for investment in psychosocial supports**

Mental Health Victoria is the peak body for mental health and wellbeing. We advocate resolutely for reform across the Victorian mental health and wellbeing system, and we do so with the guidance and expertise of our Associates.

We are writing to implore the Victorian Government to ensure it is meaningfully considering the perspectives and expertise of the mental health sector, consumers and carers, as it progresses negotiations about policy and funding for the disability reforms underway.

At present, the community mental health sector has not been adequately engaged through the coordinated inter-jurisdictional processes taking place. The sector is highly concerned that the demonstrated need for investment in psychosocial supports will not be prioritised through these processes.

The *Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial supports outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)* estimated there are 263,100 people with moderate mental illness not receiving psychosocial support through the NDIS or other government-funded programs. The changes to the NDIS will reduce the number of people who can access psychosocial supports through this program, risking a steep increase to this already significant number of people missing out on care they deserve. Further to this analysis, we are already hearing from our Associates that: ***“In our current mild to moderate services, we are seeing an increased rate of severe, persistent, and complex presentations as people are unable to find other services.”***

The value of psychosocial supports for people with a psychosocial disability or complex mental health challenge should not be underestimated. As our Associates have highlighted, ***the availability and accessibility of psychosocial supports are a human rights matter***. Investment in these services is critical to empowering a consumer to live independently and safely in the community. In addition to the significant benefits these services can provide at an individual level, they also reduce demand on acute services.

In discussion with MHV's Associates, it is clear the sector is particularly concerned that:

- there is limited alignment between reform processes and funding negotiations
- the value of psychosocial supports is not being recognised
- there is a lack of coordination and connection of services, which results in people who don't meet certain criteria but should have access to support falling through the cracks
- there is a 'missing middle' – meaning we lack appropriate services and skillsets to meet current and growing need
- some support seekers experienced challenges, grief, and trauma when transitioned from community mental health supports to the NDIS and there is risk in that occurring again when transitioning out of the NDIS
- there is a lack of education and support ahead of and during the transitional period for consumers, carers and the staff working with and supporting them
- there is a shortage of workers and a lack of secure employment, and short-term contracts only compound that challenge.

Further information about the sector's perspectives is available [here](#). Mental Health Victoria is continuing to engage with our Associates on this important policy area.

**On behalf of our Associates, Mental Health Victoria calls on the Victorian Government:**

- to consider and elevate the perspectives of those living with the need for psychosocial supports, as well as their carers, families, and kin, and the sector that supports them, as you progress negotiations with the Commonwealth Government on these important reforms;
- to enhance engagement and consultation with the community mental health sector by providing timely updates when making policy and funding decisions related to psychosocial supports;
- to carefully consider the positioning of psychosocial supports as part of the Victorian Government's decisions on program commissioning and investment. This includes policy responses to NDIS changes and the rollout of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System's recommendations.

Mental Health Victoria is available to meet with a representative of the Victorian Government to discuss this important policy area further. If you wish to discuss further, please reach out to Emily Wolter, Acting CEO, via [ceo@mhvic.org.au](mailto:ceo@mhvic.org.au).

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