



MEDIA RELEASE

Fast-track funding and new Victorian Mental Health Workforce Strategy welcomed

19 December 2021

Mental Health Victoria, the peak body for the state's mental health sector, welcomed the release today of the Victorian Government's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* and surprise commitment of an additional \$41 million to fast-track workforce growth this financial year.

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said the additional 358 new positions for graduate occupational therapists, social workers, and psychology registrars and other key professions this financial year are critically needed to help implement Royal Commission reforms and to address the mental health impacts of the pandemic.

"Today's announcement increases the total number of new positions created to around 940 this financial year. These new mental health workers will support tens of thousands of Victorians, and help save lives", Mr Clelland said.

"On behalf of the mental health sector, I would like to thank the Minister and the Department of Health for meeting the Royal Commission's very tight timeframe for the development of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy*, and for bringing forward plans to begin the expansion of the workforce".

The Victorian Government's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* sets out an exciting blueprint for the future of mental health in this state.

"There will be enormous growth in the mental health sector over the coming decade with many thousands of positions created in public and non-government organisations. We encourage recent school leavers who have just received their VCE results and older Victorians considering a career change, to think about a career in mental health".

Mr Clelland said it is important to recognise that responsibility for mental health is shared between the Federal Government and the states, but we are yet to see the Federal Government's national mental health workforce strategy. This is a critical gap, given that the Federal Government is responsible for many workforce levers, including immigration and university places.

"We recognise that the Victorian Government has had to develop its workforce strategy in the absence of the long-overdue Federal Mental Health Workforce Strategy. On behalf of the Victorian mental health sector, we call on the Federal Government to release a fully funded national strategy without delay, otherwise the Victorian reforms may be impeded", he said.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call John Foley, Director of Policy, on 0468 366 514.