



Media release

Following the 2024/25 Victorian Budget, Mental Health Victoria calls on the Victorian Government to enhance its communication and transparency, and clearly outline its plan to deliver reform of the mental health and wellbeing system to maintain the good faith of the sector and the Victorian community.

“We welcome the fact that this Budget continues to invest heavily in supporting the mental health and wellbeing system to care for the community, including through applying the revenue raised from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Levy. However, substantial reforms recommended by the Royal Commission have been missed in this budget, raising concerns about the status of their progress” said Mental Health Victoria CEO, Marcelle Mogg.

Mental Health Victoria shares the disappointment of many across the sector to see the Victorian Government has failed to allocate funding to establish a Lived and Living Experience Agency (Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, R29). This is an important recommendation designed to enable the development and delivery of a person-focused, rights based mental health and wellbeing system. The Royal Commission was clear that the voices of people with lived and living experience must be central to building a better system, and the continued absence of this agency hinders efforts to realise consumer and carer-led reform.

The Royal Commission also called for the prioritisation of 2,000 supported dwellings for Victorians living with mental illness, as well as 500 medium-term supported housing places for young people. Neither initiative, due on current reform timelines, seems to be progressed in this Budget. These are critical priorities.

To add to this disappointment, the Victorian Government will delay the rollout of the next tranche of Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Locals), deferring this program of work until 2025/26 at the earliest.

“The Locals are a key element of the new model of integrated mental health and wellbeing care to be delivered across the state. While there are workforce challenges, the Locals have proven to be an attractive service model for new staff and those returning to the sector. Delays to this rollout, means that Victorians will continue to navigate a fragmented, siloed mental health system. Our sector does an incredible job with what they have, but this delay will be felt deeply and poses concern for the progress of reform.” said Ms Mogg.

While timing of the launch of the next round of Locals remains uncertain, Mental Health Victoria is pleased to see that \$4.5m in 2024/25 will continue to fund the Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs established as an interim model of support during COVID. Further, the three-year funding commitment to develop a pipeline of clinical mental health and wellbeing graduates to staff the existing Locals is also welcome. These investments will help ensure that the current Locals are able to deliver the full suite of care they were commissioned to deliver.

Mental Health Victoria recognises that there has been significant investment over the past five years in the mental health and wellbeing system, including in this Budget. In particular, we are pleased to see:

- three years of funding for support and treatment for eating disorders, including funding for Eating Disorders Victoria. We eagerly await the finalisation and release of the Eating Disorders Strategy for Victoria; and
- one year of funding for priority populations that are disproportionately impacted by suicide through tailored investment for services supporting young people, LGBTIQ+ communities and First Nations Victorians.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System made sound recommendations about a person-centred, rights based mental health and wellbeing sector. Mental Health Victoria reiterates the need for the Victorian Government to deepen communication with the sector and the Victorian community to ensure there is clarity, collaboration, and certainty surrounding the work of sector reform.

The Victorian Government set the bar nationally in its commitment to build a mental health and wellbeing system that the community needs and deserves. We must see that progress towards this vision is on track and remains a core priority for Government. Victorians seeking mental health and wellbeing care and support cannot afford to wait any longer.

**** ENDS ****

Contact

For further information contact either:

- Marcelle Mogg, Chief Executive Officer on 03 9519 7000
- Brontë Spiteri, Executive Director, Policy and Advocacy on b.spiteri@mhvic.org.au

Mental Health Victoria is the peak body for mental health and wellbeing in Victoria. We specialise in public policy, workforce development and training, and services that build individual, organisational and community capacity. We translate best evidence into practice for the benefit of our associates and their staff, consumers and communities.

Find out more: mhvic.org.au.