



**MentalHealth
Victoria**

Collaboration • Knowledge • Leadership

Level 2, 22 Horne Street,
Elsternwick Victoria 3185
T +61 (3) 9519 7000

ABN 79 174 342 927

Preparing for reform

Co-production, culture change and leadership

Symposium summary

July 2021

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Preparing for reform

This is a momentous year for mental health and wellbeing, particularly for the state of Victoria. With the recent release of the final report from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and a historic \$3.8b investment in mental health from the Victorian Government, we are now standing at a new crossroads for mental health reform in Victoria.

As the peak body for mental health in Victoria, Mental Health Victoria (MHV) recently hosted a Symposium to help the sector through this historic and momentous time.

Held on Tuesday 29 June, 'Preparing for reform: Co-production, culture change and leadership' brought together over 200 consumers, carers, service providers, peak bodies and government representatives. In an online forum, delegates heard from experts in reform implementation, co-production and culture change to explore how we can put the recommendations of the Royal Commission into practice.

The Symposium provided the much-needed opportunity for those both within and outside the sector to come together to converse, negotiate and understand how together we can implement the changes needed to progress once-in-a-generation reforms of the mental health system.

In Mental Health Victoria's (MHV) previous Symposium, we looked at the final report from the Royal Commission and other historic inquiries, reports and strategies across the country. As the Royal Commission's recommendations start to take shape in Victoria, how we effectively manage and respond to these reforms will be fundamental to their success.

This summary features the key messages emerging across the Symposium. It highlights commentary from the Symposium's esteemed speakers and panellists as they reflected on the foundations for reform and change.

Partnering for change

'Preparing for Reform' was the second event in MHV's series of symposiums focused on the reform of the mental health system.

MHV's previous Symposium looked at the details of the final report from the Royal Commission as well as other historic inquiries, reports and strategies across the country. Read the summary of that Symposium [here](#).

Don't forget to register for the next Symposium in the series, the two-day online event, 'Partnering for change: Towards a new community model for mental health', to be held on 7 and 14 September 2021.

Implementation

The Royal Commission's final report, delivered in March this year, marked the start of an ambitious, 10-year reform agenda across Victoria. Implementation of this agenda will be critical to ensuring the reforms produce lasting and meaningful changes in what Premier Daniel Andrews conceded was a "broken" system.

Considering the scale and complexity of the task ahead, Symposium speakers identified a range of strategies and opportunities to support effective, inclusive and sustainable implementation processes, including:

- timely but steady implementation of reform to ensure effective change and enable broad, ongoing consultation and measured approaches to large-scale change
- the long-term incorporation of the lived experience voice throughout the implementation process and across the reformed sector
- strategic use of research, evidence and data to create the right services and systems for all, and to monitor the impact of reforms as they roll out
- recognition and learning from mistakes, with a focus on continuous improvement to ensure outcomes are person-centred
- resourcing, capacity building and sustainable development of all workforces in the mental health system
- broad and transparent communication across all levels
- a whole-of-system commitment to ensure a responsive system in the implementation process.

"When it comes down to practical implementation, it comes down to the same thing: getting very effectively and sustainably what people need to them, when they need it, in a way they value and in a way they benefit from."

– Dr Robyn Mildon, Executive Director, Centre for Evidence and Implementation

"This dialogue is so critical. We're not going to have all the answers now. We're not going to get it right... Implementation is how we adapt, how we adopt, how we evolve."

– Adam Fennessy PSM, Victorian Public Sector Commissioner

"It will take all of us in our respective roles in the system to think a bit differently to enable collaboration."

– Katherine Whetton, Deputy Secretary for Mental Health in the Department of Health and Human Services

"I liked that someone used the term 'co-evaluation'. It means we have got this whole system of continuous improvement and we can keep improving what we are doing through... partnerships with people with lived experience and clinicians."

– Jayne Nelson, CEO IPC Health

Co-production

Implementation of the Royal Commission's reforms creates an opportunity for genuine partnerships with people with lived experience. In these widespread changes to the system, co-production across all aspects of the various reform initiatives from the outset will ensure services are delivered and improved in a way that meets the needs of people in the mental health system.

During the Symposium, speakers and panellists discussed a range of considerations and enablers for effective co-production including:

- skilled facilitation and communication to not alienate people and to improve equal discussion
- time, compromise and patience to plan and discuss reforms effectively
- mutual learning and shared training in the co-production effort to integrate all voices in the reform
- recognition of power differentials and authenticity of collaboration
- partnerships that foster mutual learning and shared training
- building trust and relationships so all diversities are considered
- respect and value for all forms of knowledge and a broad range of voices
- value constructive tension and leave preconceived ideas at the door.

"Get angry at the problem, not the person.... When we criticise each other, we reduce the trust of everyone in the room we're working with."

– Lesley Cook, Director, Partners in Practice

"Once we form connections on commonality, then we can start getting authenticity... drop the 'I'm the clinician, you are the patient' – we are just two human beings."

– Fiona Browning, Lived experience consultant

"[Remuneration] goes to the heart of expertise rather than experience. It is foundational, fundamental; you can't overstate the importance of it."

– Kerry Hawkins, Commissioner, National Mental Health Commission

"I see co-production and co-design as opportunities to foster and build leaderships and new ways of relating between mental health services."

– Neil Turton-Lane, NDIS Manager, VMIAC

Leadership and culture change

Delivering on the reforms and aspirations will require strong leadership and pervasive culture. To facilitate truly transformational change, organisations and leaders will need to be equipped with knowledge and skills to support and lead the change going forward, in which we will all need to play our part.

Symposium speakers identified key opportunities to facilitate culture change and strong leadership including:

- lived experience partnership, leadership and innovation, including in peer support and services
- commitment to open communication throughout organisations and systems
- goals-focused, courageous and imaginative leadership
- investment in the time for change and thought development
- recognition of unintended consequences
- supportive environments for people to collaborate
- leadership that challenges current norms and discourses.

"We need compassionate leadership, so we need courage as well, to set aside some of our preconceptions and to step into a space that is largely unknown. We need to trust that we're all looking for the same outcome."

– Marie Piu, CEO Tandem Inc

"Change takes time, change is difficult, and you've got to invest a lot as a leader to achieve that change."

– Adam Fennessy PSM, Victorian Public Sector Commissioner

"This is the fork in the road, and this is the turning point... there's a lot of evidence that the mental health system can change and that there are alternatives out there."

– Neil Turton-Lane, NDIS Manager, VMIAC

"Engaging communities of practice and clinician networks is fundamental to reform... Communicate, communicate, communicate."

– Dr Andrew Milat, Director Evidence and Evaluation, NSW Ministry of Health

Bringing It All Together

Now is a critical time to ensure the Royal Commission's transformational vision can be put into practice. MHV's 'Preparing for reform' Symposium identified various opportunities to ensure the implementation process is effective, inclusive and sustainable, allowing all of us to influence, implement and participate together to improve the mental health and wellbeing of our communities, now, and into the future.

For this to occur, we need genuine and authentic co-production processes, commitments to collaboration and culture change; we need strong leadership; we need evidence-based implementation; but mostly, we need all of us working together.

This once in a generation opportunity to create a world-class mental health system will take time, but through hope and commitment, we can all implement these changes together to ensure people receive the care they want and deserve.

"It's not just an investment of money but that legwork ...what needs to change in the system to facilitate [change]?"

– Margaret Augerinos, CEO Centre for Non-Violence

"In some ways the pandemic has offered us some good ways of how collaboration can work... [people created] innovation and partnerships that might have been thought too challenging in the past."

– Katherine Whetton, Deputy Secretary for Mental Health in the Department of Health and Human Services

"It is not just about mental health in a vacuum, we are talking about the whole of people's lives... we need to come to the table so we can all sit side by side... we don't have to agree on everything but be in a space to discuss...and come to a place of understanding to take things forward."

– Marie Piu, CEO Tandem Inc

Program

9:00 – 9:10 | Welcome, Acknowledgment of Country

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

9:10 – 9:40 | Opening Address

Katherine Whetton, Deputy Secretary for Mental Health in the Department of Health and Human Services

9:40 – 10:00 | Morning tea break

10:00 – 10:45 | Panel: Implementation in practice

Dr Andrew Milat, Director Evidence and Evaluation, NSW Ministry of Health; Mary O'Hagan, New Zealand innovator, thinker and writer; Mary Roberts, Director Children and Families Support and Safeguarding, Department of Health; Margaret Augerinos, CEO Centre for Non-Violence

10:45 – 11:15 | Fireside Chat: Implementation best-practice

Dr Robyn Mildon, Executive Director, Centre for Evidence and Implementation

11:15 – 12:15 | Lunch Break, Virtual Exhibitors Hall

12:15 – 12:45 | Keynote address: Co-production as a pillar of success

Lesley Cook, Director, Partners in Practice

12:45 – 1:30 | Panel: Co-production in practice

Fiona Browning, Lived experience consultant; Kerry Hawkins, Commissioner National Mental Health Commission; Cath Roper, Consumer academic Centre for Psychiatric Nursing; Jacqui Gibson-Roos, Community consumer advocate

1:30 – 1:40 | Afternoon tea break

1:40 – 2:10 | Keynote address: Leadership and culture change as pillars of success

Adam Fennessy PSM, Victorian Public Sector Commissioner

2:10 – 2:50 | Panel: Putting reform into practice in the Victorian mental health sector

Neil Turton-Lane, NDIS Manager at VMIAC; Marie Piu, CEO Tandem Inc; A/Prof Ravi Bhat, Divisional Clinical Director Goulburn Valley Health; Jayne Nelson, CEO IPC Health

2:50 – 3:00 | Closing Remarks

Sophie Scott