



Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV)

2014-15 STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION

Supporting People with Mental Illness and a Sustainable CMMH Sector

VICSERV welcomes the Government's vision for a reformed Mental Health Community Support Service (MHCSS) system and is committed to working with and providing leadership for the Community Managed Mental Health (CMMH) sector, to influence change and shape the future of community managed mental health.

VICSERV has been an active and vocal participant in the mental health reform debate. Based on member consultations and discussions, as well as engagement with key stakeholders, VICSERV produced a key policy document *Community Managed Mental Health: An Agenda for the Future*, which was well-received by government and the CMMH sector.

In the current context of reform, the priority should remain centred on the consumers and carers in the CMMH sector. The aim of the reform, and the allocation of future resources, needs to focus on building a service system that is responsive to the needs of individuals, with the capacity to meet their needs, when and as they are ready to engage with services.

To meet the needs of people living with mental illness we need a strong and sustainable community managed mental health system, with a focus on:

- innovation,
- capacity of services to work with, and meet the needs of, consumers and carers, and
- transition to the new MHCSS framework that is seamless and maintains continuity of care.

In addition we need a mental health system that demonstrates a commitment to, and implementation of early intervention and health promotion strategies for a mentally healthy community.

Key issues identified by VICSERV to be addressed in the 2014-15 State Budget include:

- Successful management of the re-contracting process and support for industry transition;
- Development of consumer, and family and carer capacity to transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme over the next 4 years;
- Need for continued funding and indexation for MHCSS for the next 4 years; and
- Responding to the potential impact on other parts of the community sector, and on clinical services and Emergency Departments if the process is not successfully managed.

We look forward to working with the State Government on the implementation of its reform agenda and achieving a sustainable and effective CMMH sector that meets the needs of people with mental illness, their carers and families, and responsively works with them in their recovery journey.

Kim Koop
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Provide support and resources for innovative responses to people with mental illness and complex needs

The health and life outcomes for people living with serious mental illness are, overall, poor. Community services need to work more closely with mental health services, to ensure they are able to flexibly respond, and are targeted to the individual needs of people with mental illness.

Key issues for people with mental illness have not been adequately addressed to date, including:

- *Housing issues* – 42% of people with mental illness are homeless or living in tenuous housing¹, yet a stable home is a crucial component of mental health recovery.
- *Dual diagnosis* – People with a mental illness experience drug problems at far higher rates than the general community. Studies suggest that around 50% of people with a mental illness also have a drug or alcohol problem.² It is essential that people with complex needs are able to access services that appropriately meet their needs.
- *Employment* – Only 29% of people with a disability due to a psychological condition are employed – this is the lowest employment rate among all disability groups according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.³

Key Actions

VICSERV supports the allocation of funding for initiatives that ‘wrap around’ individuals and provide timely support.

- ***Address the housing needs of people with mental illness***
Funding should be allocated to initiatives that enable people with mental illness to access secure stable housing, and that engage the broader community to overcome stigma and poor accessibility. VICSERV urges the State Government to consider expansion of programs such as the *Doorway Housing and Support Program* that enable people with mental illness to access the private rental market.
- ***Address the needs of people with dual diagnosis***
Support and resources are required for ‘wrap around’ services that are able to appropriately meet the needs of people with dual diagnosis. The capacity and skills of drug and alcohol workers and services need to be increased to provide a more effective response to people with mental illness accessing these services.
- ***Support people with mental illness into employment***
Training and resources are required to further develop the skills and capacity of community mental health and other community services to increase the opportunities for people with mental illness to access employment support.
- ***Build responsive community support services***
Allocate resources to develop and support mainstream and other community services to better meet the needs of people with mental health support needs (and their carers), who have been assessed as ineligible for MHCSS.

¹ Pathways to Social Inclusion: Housing and support. VICSERV, 2008.

² Sane – Factsheet 20 : Drugs and Mental Illness

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, March Quarter 2012, 4102.0

Provide Support for a Sustainable and Responsive CMMH sector

1. Support the establishment of the new MHCSS framework

VICSERV supports the re-contracting of CMMH services but expects detailed consideration will need to be given to the management of the transition. It is concerned about the impact on consumers and carers in the process of consolidating the community managed mental health sector under the new framework, including:

- Exclusion of clients because of the adoption of the National Disability Insurance Scheme eligibility criteria.
- Demand on emergency departments because of lack of time, consumer and family awareness and resources for the transition process.
- Fragmentation in the service system, due to the time required to build collaborative practices with new partners, loss of integrated programs, and reforms in other parts of the community services sector.

Key Actions

- Provide resources and support for services whose businesses will be impacted as a result of the re-contracting and implementation process, such as the financial impacts of the winding up of services, and the transfer of clients to new service providers.
- Support the development of resources and training which focuses on family inclusive care, person centred approach, recovery oriented practice, mental health literacy, health promotion, and consumer and carer participation.
- Provide funds to develop peer support and advocacy.
- Allocate resources to build the skills and knowledge of consumers and carers to enable them to engage with services under the new framework. Informed consumers will result in increased health literacy and better plans to aid their recovery and support.
- Allocate adequate resources to support the rebuilding and development of partnerships within the new mental health catchment areas, including with other mental health and community providers.
- Strengthen the capacity of intake points to support people not eligible for services under the MHCSS framework, and support the provision of secondary consultation to mainstream services.
- Monitor the impact on the broader service system of the change in eligibility criteria, including changes in use of emergency departments, homelessness services and other primary care and community services.

2. Support the sustainability of the CMMH sector

VICSERV is concerned about the long term sustainability of the CMMH sector, and its capacity to meet the future needs of consumers and carers without adequate resourcing and support. Workforce development will be essential to help the sector implement the MHCSS framework and prepare for the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Key Actions

- Ensure that the national wage case is fully funded, and CPI is maintained, to enable organisations to meet on-going workforce issues, including the increasing wages and skills levels that are likely to result with the need for more flexible and responsive services.
- Allocate adequate levels of capital funds for ageing residential services to be brought up to safety standards.
- Support the development of the ICT capacity of the sector for sharing of information and improved business systems. There are significant costs in the 'trial and error' processes that services may go through, if adequate support and resources are not provided.

3. Support on-going Mental Health reform

VICSERV has been an active and vocal participant in the mental health reform debate and welcomed the Government's vision for a reformed mental health community support service system. We urge the State Government to build on the current reforms to achieve a sustainable and responsive community based mental health system.

Key Actions

- Complete all the enabling projects that are underway or proposed, including ensuring appropriate funding and resources are allocated for the workforce strategy.
- Allocate adequate resources for implementation of the recommendations from the review adult residential and bed based services

- Develop a strategy for the transition of the operation of Community Care Units to CMMH services.

4. Support a Strong Community Services Sector

VICSERV welcomed the Department of Health's appointment of Dr Peter Shergold to identify how best to improve the effectiveness and ensure the sustainability of Victoria's community services sector.

Dr Shergold's final report on *Service Sector Reform: A Roadmap for community and human services reform* highlights the need for a new approach to working with community service organisations to achieve better outcomes for clients and their families. For the current reforms to be successful the Report identifies the need for greater collaboration and coordination between service providers and government departments, and greater investment in the sector to achieve the desired outcomes for the community, both economically and socially.

VICSERV urges the State Government to allocate adequate resources to implement key recommendations of the Service Sector Reform Report in collaboration with services providers.