
ROYAL COMMISSION INTO VICTORIA'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM FINAL REPORT

ORYGEN SUMMARY



ROYAL COMMISSION FINAL REPORT

Orygen welcomes the release of the Final Report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System. The release of the report is a watershed moment for mental health system and service reform in Victoria. Orygen would like to congratulate the work of the Commissioners, the Royal Commission team, the Expert Advisory Committee and all stakeholders and individuals across Victoria who contributed their expertise and experiences to this process.

The report, spanning five volumes and approximately 3,000 pages, delivers 65 recommendations to the Victorian Government, in addition to the nine recommendations from the interim report. The Victorian Government has already committed to implementing all recommendations.

CASE FOR REFORM

The Royal Commission Final Report clearly describes the challenges and shortcomings that have plagued the system and prevented Victorians experiencing mental ill-health from accessing the care they need including:



- An insufficient level of political and policy attention, resulting in the de-prioritisation of mental health within the health system.
- Inadequate investment, leading to an under-resourced, overworked and crisis-driven mental health system and workforce.
- The existence of a missing middle, with the Commission estimating that 2 out of 3 Victorians were unable to access the specialist care they needed. In 2019-20 that equated to almost 100,000 Victorians.
- An inequitable and poorly integrated service system typified by a 'postcode lottery' when accessing care.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SYSTEM REDESIGN

The Final Report provides a series of major statewide legislative, systemic, governance and funding reforms including:

- The introduction of a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Act (**Recommendation 42**) and new mechanisms of government oversight and accountability, which includes a Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework (**Recommendation 1**) to be reported against annually; a

REVOLUTION IN MIND

new Mental Health and Wellbeing Sub-Committee of Cabinet chaired by the Premier for at least two years (**Recommendation 1**); an independent and statutory Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (**Recommendation 44**); a Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing Division within the Department of Health (**Recommendation 45**); and the establishment of a Suicide Prevention and Response Office, led by a State Suicide Prevention and Response Adviser (**Recommendation 26**).

- The establishment of a new non-government agency, overseen by a skills-based board that is chaired by and consisting of a majority of people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress to deliver training, and develop and deliver services (**Recommendation 29**).
- A six level service system, incorporating: 1) families, community, carers, and other informal supports; 2) government and community services; 3) primary and secondary mental health services; 4) local mental health and wellbeing services (50-60 new adult to older adult services which also have a remit to deliver out-of-hours crisis supports to all ages); 5) area mental health services (22 new adult services for specialist care and 13 new infant, child and youth services that dismantle rigid geographic catchments); and 6) statewide services (for people whose needs are unable to be met across the other five levels).
- The system will be designed around eight regional areas, governed by regional mental health and wellbeing boards (**Recommendation 4**) responsible for planning, contracting and commissioning local mental health and wellbeing services and area mental health services. While these boards are being established, an interim multi-agency advisory panel in each region will provide input and advice to the Department of Health.
- New statewide services, which include a new statewide trauma service (**Recommendation 22**); expansion of existing specialist youth forensic services to a statewide model (**Recommendation 37**); and a new statewide specialist service for people living with mental illness and substance use or addiction, built on the foundations established by the Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative (**Recommendation 36**).
- Ensuring that digital technology will become a core feature of the contemporary system (**Recommendation 60**).
- The Royal Commission recommended the Victorian Government act immediately to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in mental health and wellbeing service delivery, with the aim to eliminate these practices within 10 years. New Mental Health and Wellbeing Act to specify measures to reduce rates and negative impacts of compulsory assessment and treatment, seclusion and restraint (**Recommendation 42**). A Mental Health Improvement Unit will be established within Safer Care Victoria. The unit will focus on reducing the use of seclusion, restraint and compulsory treatment (**Recommendation 54**). The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will monitor use of seclusion and restraint (**Recommendation 53**).

WORKFORCE

- The interim report included a number of recommendations for the development of both the lived experience workforce, including peer worker pathways and training (**Recommendation 6**), and building education and training pathways and recruitment strategies in areas of need, including rural and regional areas (**Recommendation 7**). The recommendation to include Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work in the free TAFE list has already been delivered by the Victorian Government.
- The Final Report recommends the development and implementation of a Workforce Strategy and Implementation Plan by the end of 2021 and structural workforce reforms by the end of 2023 which attract, train and transition the necessary range of diverse and multidisciplinary staff into Local, Area and Statewide mental health services (**Recommendation 57**).

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- For research and innovation, the Royal Commission recommended that an existing entity is commissioned to provide dedicated support and resources for innovation in mental health treatment, care and support (**Recommendation 64**) and that the Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing be enabled to translate research throughout the system in collaboration with other research centres and institutes.

YOUTH SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN YOUNG PEOPLE

The Royal Commission highlighted the adverse impacts of mental ill-health on young people, particularly at the stage in life where many are developing new relationships and transitioning to further education, work and independent living. It was noted that this is also a stage in life when the majority of people will first experience mental ill-health, in particular anxiety, mood, impulse control and substance use disorders. The Royal Commission found a strong case for focus and investment on the mental health and wellbeing of young people.

SERVICE SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

The Royal Commission recommends the establishment of a new youth mental health and wellbeing service stream to support young people (aged 12–25 years), with existing youth services to be reformed and expanded.



“Age and developmentally appropriate treatment, care and support will be provided, and strict age-based eligibility will be removed. One responsive and integrated infant, child and youth mental health and wellbeing system will be established to provide developmentally appropriate treatment, care and support for newborns to 25-year-olds.” (pp 21, Executive Summary)

The Royal Commission has provided a fact sheet [here](#) for infant child and youth mental health and wellbeing services.

Specifically, this will include the establishment of a dedicated service stream for young people (**Recommendation 20**). **It is recommended that:**

- by the end of 2022, a dedicated service stream for young people within the 13 Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services is established;
- Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services are available for young people aged 12 to 25 (until a person’s 26th birthday), with age boundaries and transitions to be applied flexibly in partnership with young people and their families, carers and supporters;
- headspace centres will predominantly form the Youth Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, although, over time, other providers may also choose to become providers of Youth Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services;

- there is development of formal partnerships, step-up and step-down referral pathways, shared staff and infrastructure, and co-location between headspace centres and Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services; and
- the Commonwealth Government, headspace National and Primary Health Networks work collaboratively to ensure that Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services become the preferred providers of headspace centres where they exist or are established in Victoria.

Other recommendations that relate to the 13 Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services include:

- the employment of up to three specialist trauma practitioners in each of the 13 Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (**Recommendation 24**); and
- resourcing Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services to support Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations through primary consultation, secondary consultation and shared care (**Recommendation 33**).

The 13 Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health Services should be delivered through a partnership between a health service or hospital and a non-government organisation. As an exception, the Commission considered that Orygen’s clinical services require separation from Melbourne Health to better enable integration with Orygen’s five headspace centres in the north-west region and integration to youth mental health research and innovation capabilities (pp246-247 Volume 1).

The Royal Commission recommend a redesign of bed-based services for young people (**Recommendation 21**) through:

- ensuring that all eight regions have a Youth Prevention and Recovery Centre for young people aged 16 to 25, supported through a common and consistent model of care;
- a new stream of inpatient beds across Victoria for young people aged 18 to 25 should be created by reconfiguring existing inpatient beds for adults and using an allocation of the 100 new beds recommended; and
- ensuring Hospital in the Home services are to be made available for young people as an alternative to acute hospital-based treatment, care and support where appropriate.

Recommendations relating to safe spaces for mental health and suicidal crises (**Recommendation 9**) note that:

- The Government should invest in diverse and innovative ‘safe spaces’ and crisis respite facilities for the resolution of mental health and suicidal crises. These spaces should be consumer led and, where appropriate, delivered in partnership with non-government organisations.
- Four of these safe space facilities across the state should be specifically for, and co-designed with, young people.



ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A number of other recommendations relate to the mental health of young people, including:

- funding evidence-informed initiatives for schools, including anti-stigma and anti-bullying programs, to assist in supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing. It is also

recommended that the Government develop a digital platform that contains a validated list of these initiatives (**Recommendation 17**);

- specialist youth forensic mental health programs are expanded to a statewide model, including across the 13 Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services, to provide consistent and appropriately specialised treatment, care and support to children and young people in contact with, or at risk of coming into contact with, the youth justice system (**Recommendation 37**);
- greater support for young people living with mental ill-health and experiencing homelessness or unstable housing by investing in a further 500 new medium-term (up to two years) supported housing places for young people aged 18 to 25 years (**Recommendation 25**);
- ensuring people can access services regardless of preferred language, neurocognitive ability etc. and that diverse communities are enabled to design, deliver services and support system navigation (**Recommendation 34**);
- facilitate system wide involvement of families and carers, including key leadership roles across the system; the elevation of family inclusion by the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission and clear **expectations for services to be family inclusive (Recommendation 30)**;
- supporting young carers by funding the co-design and expansion of supports across Victoria for young carers and children and young people who have a family member living with mental illness or psychological distress. In addition, all area mental health services are to employ new workers to support young carers in their local environment and more brokerage funding should be made available to support young carers with their practical needs (**Recommendation 32**); and
- the identification and promotion of opportunities to increase collaboration in translational research on the mental health and wellbeing of infants, children and young people (**Recommendation 63**).

CALL TO ACTION

***“The Commission’s inquiry is over; the time for decisive and deliberate action is now.”
Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System. Final Report. Page 32. Executive
Summary***

The Royal Commission provides a clear call to action for the Victorian Government and Victorian community for the urgent commencement of this reform agenda. Orygen welcomes the Commission’s direction that in implementing the final recommendations, the consultative work of the Commission should not be repeated, duplicated or the decisions behind recommendations revisited. Instead it is critical that the reform process starts immediately and Orygen looks forward to working with the Victorian Government to undertake the significant work that is needed to be done.