

Mental health and wellbeing reform in Victoria

An update from the Deputy Secretary, Mental Health and Wellbeing



28 March 2024

Dear all

This Wednesday marked a significant occasion for all of us in the mental health and wellbeing sector as we gathered with Mental Health Victoria to celebrate three years of reform following the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System final report.

It not only served as a reminder of the journey we've embarked on but shone a light on the big impacts we have already made in such short amount of time.

Lived and living experience workers play a critical role in supporting Victorians with mental illness or psychological distress, families, carers and supporters - and it was exciting to hear how these reform initiatives are providing opportunities and making a positive difference for workers, service providers and the community.

[Read more about Lived and Living Experience Workforces initiatives.](#)

The final report of the Royal Commission set an ambitious vision for the mental health and wellbeing system, delivered in a 10-year timeframe, across three phases.

Our work to transform Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system is well underway and there is much to be proud of as we reflect on the progress we've made in the first phase of reform.

During the past year, the Department of Health has worked closely with the

sector to hear feedback on reform priorities to date and seek insights on how we should move forward. Feedback from engagement activities including eight forums, with input from more than 300 participants is helping us to plan the reform program for the next three years.

I look forward to sharing the details of the plan with you when it is released.

As I mentioned in the previous sector bulletin, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division executive structure has been updated following recent changes within the Department of Health. We have finalised our executive recruitment processes and the new executive team structure and contact details are now available.

[Download Mental Health and Wellbeing Division Executive Team overview.](#)

Plans are underway to refresh the Mental Health and Wellbeing sector bulletin with a new look and content features. We are also seeking to update our distribution list, so if you would like to continue receiving this regular bulletin – [please subscribe here.](#)

I hope you enjoy reading about the work we're delivering in partnership with you, and I thank you for your ongoing work and support.

Kind regards
Katherine

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Restrictive Interventions – updated clinical guideline

From 1 April 2024, the use of restrictive interventions on a person receiving a mental health and wellbeing service in the emergency departments and urgent care centres of designated mental health services must be reported to the Chief Psychiatrist under the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022*.

This aligns with the requirements for reporting restrictive interventions in these settings with the rest of Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system.

An updated guideline on restrictive interventions includes new content on legal requirements and clinical best practice expectations in emergency departments and urgent care centres. It also includes new sections on:

- receiving a mental health and wellbeing service in an emergency department and urgent care centre
- transfer of care and control, and
- intoxication with alcohol and other drugs.

[Advance final copies of the updated clinical guideline and the reporting directive are available online](#) and become effective 1 April 2024.

The current interim guideline and the reporting directive for restrictive interventions will remain in operation until midnight, 31 March 2024.

Workforce information sessions:

The Office of the Chief Psychiatrist (OCP) has presented a series of weekly information sessions for staff of designated mental health services, led by Acting Chief Psychiatrist Dr David Huppert and senior clinical staff of the OCP.

[A copy of the presentation is available here.](#)

Recordings of the first two sessions are available below:

- [1# information session \(Presentation delivered on Friday, 8 March from 12.00pm – 1.00pm\)](#)
- [2# information session \(Presentation delivered on Tuesday, 12 March from 11.30am – 12.30pm\)](#)

Recommendations to strengthen perinatal mental health screening

A new report outlines key recommendations to strengthen perinatal mental health screening in Victoria.

Pregnancy and the first couple of years following birth can be a challenging time for parents, carers and families, with an increased prevalence of mental ill health.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System identified a need to review approaches to perinatal mental health screening to address inclusivity, cultural appropriateness, and the therapeutic context of screening (recommendation 18.2).

In response to the recommendation, the Victorian Department of Health commissioned a review of the evidence to improve perinatal mental health screening.

The Summary Report sets out key findings and recommendations that aim to strengthen screening practice, build workforce capability and confidence, and improve experiences and continuity of care.

[The Summary Report to the Review of perinatal mental health screening approaches is available on the Health.vic website.](#)

The department is establishing an external Expert Advisory Group to help develop the Victorian perinatal mental health screening guidelines. Expressions of interest are now open for the Expert Advisory Group.

- [EOI Information sheet](#)
- [EOI Application form \(editable pdf\)](#)

Please review the terms of reference in the EOI Information sheet and submit your EOI Application form to maternity@health.vic.gov.au by **midnight Friday 19 April 2024**.

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted for further information. For more information contact maternity@health.vic.gov.au

Upcoming opportunity: Collaborative Centre research panel

The Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing is establishing a new, independent panel to bring vital research expertise into its decision-making processes.

The panel will play an important role in ensuring the Collaborative Centre's research programs align with community needs and are driven by rigorous evidence and experiential knowledge.

The panel will consist of people with diverse expertise in mental health and wellbeing research in Victoria. This includes, but is not limited to, people with research experience in:

- translational research
- lived experience research (consumer and carer)
- implementation science
- clinical/practice research
- regional/rural health.

An expression of interest process will be announced soon to seek suitable qualified members for the panel.

[Please register your details via the online form](#) if you would like to be notified when expressions of interest open.

Our workforce, our future: Join us at a Local Implementation Team forum near you!

As part of the implementation of *Our workforce, our future: a capability framework for Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce* the Department of Health is holding a series of forums across Victoria to bring the sector together to form Local Implementation Teams (LITs).

LITs will be spaces for collaboration between members of the mental health and wellbeing workforce who have an interest in the implementation of Our workforce, our future.

The team will plan, execute and oversee the activities that support and sustain the capability framework within their local area.

Anyone working in a state funded mental health and wellbeing program can be involved in a LIT. You might work in a health service, a non-government organisation, or a community health service in workforce development, middle management or frontline service delivery.

We are especially interested in participation from:

- emerging leaders and practice champions from a range of disciplines and roles
- members of the lived and living experience workforce
- workers from diverse communities.

[To find out more, download a fact sheet with information about the LITs.](#)

The forums will be full day events held between April and July 2024. They will deliver presentations on capability development, showcase some of the work already being done, and provoke discussion about sector needs in the region. The event will close with a networking session.

Attendance at the forums will demonstrate an intention to be part of the ongoing LITs.

[Read more about forum locations and dates, and to express your interest in participating in LITs.](#)

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