

Mental health and wellbeing reform in Victoria

An update from the Deputy Secretary, Mental Health and Wellbeing



29 April 2024

Dear all

I recently had the great privilege of catching up with many of our sector stakeholders at the Health Sector Summit.

The event was run by the Department of Health and was a fantastic opportunity to collaborate and build connections as we work towards the goal of better connected care for every Victorian.

Sessions around improving cultural safety in our health system and services were particularly important and invigorating.

I am delighted to let you know that Associate Professor Sophie Adams has been appointed as Victoria's new Chief Psychiatrist.

Many of you may already know Sophie from her role as the Divisional Medical Director of Mental Health at Austin Health, where she has been instrumental in ensuring the delivery of clinical governance, quality and safety, and evidence-based consumer-focused care.

Sophie is deeply committed to fostering collaboration and partnerships across various service sectors, amplifying the voices of those with lived experience. We eagerly anticipate her commencement at the Department of Health in mid-July.

I extend my gratitude to Dr David Huppert for his leadership as Acting Chief Psychiatrist during this transition period. David's dedication has been invaluable during a time marked by significant organisational changes and heightened responsibilities for the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist.

As I mentioned in the previous issue, we are updating the bulletin's distribution list.

If you'd like to continue receiving the bulletin, please subscribe [here](#).
It will only take a minute!

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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New Statewide Action Plan to reduce drug harms

The Victorian Government has launched a Statewide Action Plan to reduce drug harms across the state. The \$95.1 million Statewide Action Plan responds to the recommendations of Ken Lay's report. The Plan also responds to recommendations of John Ryan's review of the Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR).

The Plan provides more support for harm reduction services and initiatives across Victoria and in Melbourne's CBD. It does not include a second medically supervised injecting service in the CBD.

The Plan will see a \$36.4 million capital investment to establish a Community Health Hub at 244 Flinders Street, Melbourne, to open in 2026. The Hub will be operated by cohealth and will provide wraparound health and social support services and care coordination for people in the city.

The Plan will also see the appointment of Victoria's first Chief Addiction Adviser and development of a statewide alcohol and other drugs strategy.

Other key features of the plan include:

- more cohealth assertive street outreach teams across the CBD and in two new locations outside the CBD
- a Victorian-first hydromorphone trial at the Community Health Hub
- increased access to pharmacotherapy in up to 30 locations through a grants program
- a trial of Naloxone vending machines alongside needle exchange programs
- an Australian-first overdose prevention and response helpline.

[Read the Victorian Government media release.](#)

[Read a summary of the Action Plan.](#)

[Read Ken Lay's final report and the Victorian Government response.](#)

[Read the Victorian Government response to the Ryan Review.](#)

Collaborative Centre new board members appointed

The Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing has appointed two additional board members from its lead partners, the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne. They are:

- Dr David Fenn – Royal Melbourne Hospital (research partner)
- Associate Professor Bridget Hamilton – University of Melbourne (academic partner)

Dr Fenn is a senior Victorian psychiatrist at the Royal Melbourne Hospital with over 20 years of experience in the public and private sectors.

Associate Professor Hamilton is a clinical academic at the University of Melbourne. She is a registered nurse with a 30-year career as a mental health specialist clinician, manager, educator, and researcher in public sector services.

[Read more on the Collaborative Centre's website.](#)

Restrictive Interventions – online learning module available

From 1 April 2024, the use of restrictive interventions on a person receiving a mental health and wellbeing service in emergency departments (EDs) and urgent care centres (UCCs) of designated mental health services must be reported to the Chief Psychiatrist.

A new e-learn module on restrictive interventions in EDs and UCCs is now available.

[Visit the Mental Health Professional Online Development \(MHPOD\) learning program](#) and follow these steps:

- Create a login, enter an email address and password.
- Search for 'Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 Module'.
- Select 'Module 6 – Restrictive Interventions in Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Centres'.

[The Chief Psychiatrist's guideline and reporting directive on restrictive interventions are available on the Health.Vic website.](#)

Public Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service announced

The Victorian Government has announced a new dedicated public youth mental health service to be operated in partnership with Orygen.

The Parkville Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service will be devoted to the mental health care of young people aged 12–25 in the north-west and west of metropolitan Melbourne.

The service will continue delivering the Orygen Specialist Program (OSP) – currently delivered by the Royal Melbourne Hospital – offering targeted primary and specialist mental health care to young people with complex mental illness.

[Read the Victorian Government media release.](#)

Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM Framework) in mental health and wellbeing services

The Office of the Chief Psychiatrist is interested in consulting with mental health and wellbeing service providers to gain insights into their organisational challenges and successes in implementing the MARAM Framework.

Information gathered will contribute towards the development of a Chief Psychiatrist Guideline to assist Victorian mental health and wellbeing services in the ongoing implementation and compliance with the Act.

Victoria's MARAM Framework was legislated in 2018 through an amendment of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008. MARAM training for staff of all levels, including those in leadership roles and practitioners, offers the opportunity to align practice with the framework.

If you would like to contribute, please get in touch with the consultant undertaking this project, Dr Sabin Fernbacher, at consulting@sfernbacher.com.au

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