

Our Response to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System

1. About the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System



Background

In February 2019 the Mental Health System was described by many as 'broken' and failing to support those who needed it most.

Throughout 2019 and 2020, the Commission extensively engaged with people with a lived and living experience of with mental illness, their families, carers and supporters, mental health workers, researchers, service providers and others.

Powerful contributions were heard from people with lived and living experience who shared personal experiences about how the system has failed and sometimes even harmed them.

Eastern Health welcomed the opportunity to be part of the process [Mental Health Royal Commission Submissions](http://www.easternhealth.org.au/mental-health-royal-commission-submissions) ([easternhealth.org.au](http://www.easternhealth.org.au))

Recommendations from the Royal Commission

The Royal Commission has made 65 recommendations to transform Victoria's Health Service, which will be implemented over a ten-year timeframe.

'The Commission's recommendations are centred on transformational reform, with a vision for a balanced system where mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support are provided in the community, hospital and other residential settings.

These reforms aim to rebalance the system so that more services will be delivered in community settings and extend beyond a health response to a more holistic approach to good mental health and wellbeing across the community'

2. Major themes emerging from the Royal Commission's engagement and research



Extensive engagement revealed these themes:

- **The system is overwhelmed, unable to keep up with the number of people seeking treatment**
- **Investment is inadequate and the workforce is under-resourced**
- **There are clear gaps in the system:**
 - Community-based services are lacking
 - There is a 'missing middle' – people have needs that are too complex or too severe to be met through seeing a GP or private psychologist/psychiatrist but not severe enough to meet the criteria for entry into specialist mental health services
 - The system is crisis-driven where hospital Emergency Departments are used as entry points.
- **The system is out of balance compared with what we know works and is needed:**
 - There is an over-reliance on medication, use of restraint, seclusion and compulsory treatment
 - There is a lack of focus on therapeutic strength-based treatments
 - People are not involved in making their own decisions about their treatment, care and support
 - Families, carers and supporters feel left out and are not receiving appropriate support
- **Accessing services can be difficult:**
 - Wait periods are lengthy and people become more unwell, before they can get help
 - Poverty and disadvantage make access harder
 - Access is worse in regional and rural areas where suicide rates and workforce shortages are higher in these areas
 - There are barriers to care for people from diverse communities and social groups - including Aboriginal people, LGBTIQ+ people, refugees, asylum seekers, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and people living with disabilities

3. Our Response to the Royal Commission



In January 2022 Eastern Health formed a Royal Commission Project Team to guide and support the development and implementation of a transformation plan

Consultation sessions led by the project team have taken place with a wide range of clinicians and lived experience workers from across our Mental Health Program. A great deal of valuable information has been gathered through these discussions about how Eastern Health can best transform and address the Royal Commission's recommendations and the eight initial priorities.

The Transformation Plan was completed and submitted to the Department of Health in the end of June 2022.

We aim to provide safe spaces for all our consumers and are committed to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals. This includes the needs of our first nations people, trans, gender diverse and non-binary consumers. We aim to work with our consumers to identify what is needed in order for them to feel safe.

We welcome any questions about Eastern Health's Royal Commission response which you can send to the Project Team at MHRoyalCommissionProject@easternhealth.org.au

4. Eastern Health's Mental Health and Wellbeing Transformation Plan - 8 Priority Areas



The Department of Health (DoH) has provided Eastern Health with initial funding to address eight key priorities over the next three years. Consultation is now occurring for Eastern Health to develop its own Transformation Plan to ensure successful delivery of the eight priority areas:

1. People with lived and living experience of mental ill health will be embedded in the leadership, design and delivery of Eastern Health's Mental Health Services.
2. Two clear aged-based service streams will be developed:
 - Infant, Child and Youth for Victorians aged 0-25
 - Adult and Older Adult for Victorians aged 26 years and older
3. An initial boost of funding will be used to increase the number of clinical staff in existing mental health services in order to meet growing demand.
4. Delivering more services outside of standard business hours to provide increased access to treatments and support.
5. More opportunities for our mental health clinicians to provide primary consultation, secondary consultation and shared care.
6. Forming a partnership with a non-government organisation that provides wellbeing supports, to recognise and support relationships between social factors and a person's mental health and wellbeing.
7. Linking mental health care and services to alcohol and other drugs treatment, care and supports with a 'no wrong door' approach.
8. Support the establishment of 50-60 new Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and wellbeing services across Victoria over the next six years. As these services are developed and established, Eastern Health will be ready to support and work with them.