



Commitment to Royal Commission encouraging but more needed to ensure reform is lived experience led.

Friday, 26 May 2023

VMIAC welcomed the Government's commitment to some key Royal Commission reforms in the 2023/24 Victorian State Budget but called for real commitment to consumer-focused initiatives.

VMIAC CEO, Craig Wallace said, "We acknowledge the challenging economic and social environment due to COVID and natural disasters. We note these recent events have driven greater need for mental health and community supports for marginalised Victorians."

Craig went on, "At service level we welcomed government support for the continuation of community-based Hub services while ongoing procurement for locals continue, as well as the continuation of the hospital in the home. This program has shown promising results and can be a good alternative for those who don't feel safe in clinical environments."

VMIAC support recent calls for a comprehensive approach to transition planning as Victoria moves from existing programs to establish new service models and reform components, including those that feature lived and living experience workforces. "We await further detail on how the transition of some programs will be managed to ensure consumer and peer led programs won't be disadvantaged during this time", said Craig.

VMIAC also welcomed the funding of the next stage of operations for the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing and look forward to working with the Collaborative Centre to ensure fidelity to consumer principles is held at the heart of this new entity.

VMIAC welcomed the Budget's inclusion of support for stronger leadership, oversight and accountability of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (MHWBC). Craig Wallace said, "We hope to see the expenditure of this money reported transparently so the MHWBC can demonstrate how it is using its new and existing powers. This includes public annual reporting on compliance orders, own initiative inquiries, complaint data reviews and the number of active cases looking into offences".

The Royal Commission reforms have resulted in significant activity across the services sector and propose substantial changes that will impact the lives of service users. For this reason, VMIAC were disappointed funds were not allocated in the Budget for (Recommendation 29) - a New Agency led by people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress.

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Craig Wallace said, “VMIAC question the government’s understanding of what it means for consumers to truly lead reform and challenge the decision to not fund the very agency which would assist this to happen effectively. VMIAC intends to continue strong advocacy and campaign on this issue.”

Craig continued, “The Royal Commission clearly stated consumers and service users need to lead the transformation of our mental health system. Recommendation 29 was for the establishment of an agency that would build the leadership capabilities and capacity of consumers and service users across the state to fully articulate their concerns, engage with and lead change. The agency has been put on hold while some other programs that consumers have expressed continue harmful approaches are funded”.

“VMIAC call for timely resourcing to establish the New Agency so consumer led initiatives and organisations can play a real role in the post reform environment. We would like to work with the government to increase their understanding and advise them to change their decision about this funding”, Craig said.

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