

Membership Briefing on RC Report and recommendations Slides and Speaking Notes 11 March 2021

After two years of work the Royal Commission into the mental health system in Victoria has finalised and released its final report.

During 2019 and 2020 VMIAC was funded to support consumers to prepare their personal witness statements and develop submissions on what needed to be heard by the Commissioners many of you were part of that process

The commission released an interim report at the end of 2019 which had as part of its recommendations:

- development of a Collaborative Centre
- development of a Peer Led Service
- training and development of the Consumer Workforce
- increase in acute beds across the state

The final report has 65 recommendations which cover a wide range of issues and which will transform the mental health sector over the next ten years which is the time estimated to bring about this major change.

The Commission acknowledged that there have been numerous attempts to reform the Victorian mental health system. which have failed to deliver what the Victorian community deserves. *This Commission carries the weight of unrealised hopes and expectations accumulated over decades. This time must be different— the results of this inquiry must lead to transformational change. (p4 Section5)*

The Commission states that its reform agenda is about the creation of a totally new approach to build a new system to meet the evolving needs and expectations of individuals and communities now and into the future.

What is important is that the RC has given:

- A clear vision on what will be different
- Expectations of collaboration at every level
- Recognition that these issues need to be dealt with broadly and beyond the traditional mental health system
- New structures at every level
- Advice on the expertise is needed across the decisions

The Commission is clear, and states on a number of occasions, that the workforce is key to the success of the new vision being put into action. The workforce must be supported and involved in implementation from the very start.

As a starting point the RC has recommended that the new MH system spans from wellbeing and prevention through to acute intervention and care. New services will be developed that address these concerns with some new focus on early intervention especially with children and young people.

Responsibility is being taken at the highest level in government with the Premier committing to implement every recommendation and finding the funds to do this. He will be chairing a Cabinet sub-committee for two years to implement and monitor the recommendations are achieved.

There will also be an interdepartmental committee at the highest level to look at both how mental health is addressed in their departments and how their area contributes to the mental wellbeing of the community.

The interdepartmental committee will consider the social determinants of mental health including housing and both a cause and an outcome of mental distress.

There will also be a Division within DHS that takes responsibility for the practical implementation and will be at a very senior level

Of particular interest to us is the establishment of a Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will be responsible for independent oversight of the quality and safety of treatment, care and support, as well as for receiving and responding to complaints about treatment, care and support.

It will also include the current role of the Mental Health Complaints Commission

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will have a key role in:

- Elevating the leadership of people with lived experience in decision-making about policies and programs;
- Developing leadership capabilities of people with lived experience;
- Designing initiatives to prevent and address stigma
- Designing initiatives to develop awareness and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of people with lived experience.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will have a Chair Commissioner and at least one Consumer Commissioner.

Consumer Leadership and Participation

The Commission states strongly that consumer leadership is critical in a number of areas not least of which is in the delivery of high-quality and safe mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support including:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission,
- Mental Health Improvement Unit of Safer Care Victoria,
- Services.

On numerous occasions the RC states that it is critical that people with lived experience – particularly consumers – are front and central in the design and implementation of the new system.

This approach will:

- *place the voice of the consumer—and their families, carers and supporters—at the heart of service and system improvement by ensuring greater prominence of lived experience voices in every oversight and improvement function*

- *help services and their workforce to deliver high-quality and safe treatment, care and support.*

In a similar vein the RC highlights the importance of co-production in every aspect of the achievement of their vision.

Co-production is different from other partnership approaches because it values the expertise and knowledge of those most affected by the problem and actively responds to power differentials within partnerships.

It is clear that the RC has considered the ways in which power can be shifted in the system and that this is critical if the system is to be changed.

In light of the power imbalances that permeate the current system, co-production cannot occur without leadership from people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress.

They go on to explain that co-production involves people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress leading or partnering across all aspects of an initiative or program from the outset—that is, co-planning, co-designing, co-delivering and co-evaluating.

They also acknowledge that co-production takes time.

The RC also stresses the need for the consumer voice to be heard at every level in the mh system and not just to speak but to have a full capacity in decision making.

Elevating the leadership of people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress requires that they have decision-making authority, with influence over policy and resourcing decisions.

Another major initiative will be the development of eight Regional Boards which will be made up of health, educational and community representatives and at least one consumer. The Regional Boards will activate local level activity ranging from the development of Community Collectives through to monitoring the performance of treatment services.

Community Collectives⁵ for mental health and wellbeing will be established in each of the 79 local government area by the end of 2022. Their role will be to guide and lead efforts to promote social connection and inclusion in Victorian communities and test and develop a range of initiatives that support community participation, inclusion and connection.

Again, this is a major opportunity for consumers to take a leadership position. It is also an insight into the importance that the RC places on community

A significant chapter in the report discusses ways in which community groups and community members can support the mental health and wellbeing of local communities. *The crucial role of community in mental health and wellbeing is a key theme throughout the Commission's entire suite of reforms,*

Finally, the RC supports VMIAC's position on the need to eliminate violence in all forms from the treatment system and calls for this to happen over the next 10 years. We will take action to shorten this time to 5 years.

In relation to this recommendation the RC has also called for the Mental Health Act to be revoked and rewritten which we thoroughly support.

This is just a small overview of the recommendations and the potential for optimism in the future. We have just touched the surface of what is in the 15 Kilo 5 volume report. We will be looking in more detail over the next weeks so join us again on a Thursday afternoon at 4:00pm.