



24 January 2019

Mental Health Royal Commission Establishment
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 4509
Melbourne Vic 3001

Ask for: Jo Noesgaard
Phone: 9932 1209
Our Ref: A3013679

Dear Sir/Madam,

Royal Commission into Mental Health Terms of Reference Consultation

Hobsons Bay City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission into Mental Health.

Mental health is a key priority for Hobsons Bay, particularly for our young people. Local figures show there is a higher rate of mental health inpatient admissions for young people in Hobsons Bay than the Western Metropolitan Region.¹

Hobsons Bay has fewer General Practitioners than the Victorian average,² in addition there are long wait lists for mental health services meaning that some people are missing out.³

Please find attached our submission. If you have any questions please contact Jo Noesgaard, Acting Manager Strategy and Advocacy on 9932 1209 or email jnoesgaard@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.

We look forward to the outcomes and future opportunities to continue to strengthen mental health and wellbeing within Hobsons Bay.

Yours sincerely,

Aaron van Egmond
Chief Executive Officer

¹ Department of Health and Human Services (2018) *Victorian Admitted Episode Dataset (VAED) 2017-2018* DHHS, Melbourne

² Hobsons Bay City Council (2018) Research Summary Snapshot of Health and Wellbeing in Hobsons Bay, Hobsons Bay City Council

³ Hobsons Bay City Council. (2015) *Mental Health and Wellbeing in Hobsons Bay: Scoping Paper. The Role of Local Government*



Royal Commission into Mental Health Terms of Reference Consultation

The City of Hobsons Bay covers an area of 64 square kilometres, extending seven to 20 kilometres south-west of Melbourne's central business district, and is home to approximately 95,000 residents.

Local figures from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2014 show that approximately nine per cent of the Hobsons Bay population suffers from high to very high levels of psychological distress.⁴

Mental health is a particular concern for young people in Hobsons Bay. In 2015-16, the rate of in-patient admissions for 10 to 17 year olds (9.06 per 1,000 people) was higher than the rate for the Western Metropolitan Region (6.46 per 1,000 people) and Victoria (7.85 per 1,000 people). The rates for all three areas has increased since 2010-11.⁵

Local data suggests that secondary students (from years 7, 9 and 11) reported higher levels of psychological distress (20 per cent) in Hobsons Bay compared to in the Western Metropolitan Region (14 per cent) and in Victoria (13 per cent).⁶ Six per cent of counselling requests in Hobsons Bay related to suicide or self-harm.⁷

Hobsons Bay has a significant gap in mental health support for young people. Service mapping of mental health services was conducted in Hobsons Bay in 2017. Some of the areas (Altona-Seaholme and Altona Meadows) have a relatively high population of 12-25 year olds compared to other suburbs in the municipality but are not sufficiently serviced.⁸

Mental health is influenced by the circumstances and environments we live, work, learn, play and build relationships within. Actions for change requires a whole of government approach. The following articulates areas that should be further considered within the Terms of Reference for the Royal Commissions into Mental Health.

⁴ Department of Health and Human Services (2015) *Victorian Population Health Survey 2014*

⁵ Department of Health and Human Services (2018), Victorian Admitted Episodes Dataset (VAED) 2017-18, DHHS, Melbourne

⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010, Adolescent Community Profile, City of Hobsons Bay

⁷ Hobsons Bay City Council. (2015) *Mental Health and Wellbeing in Hobsons Bay: Scoping Paper*. The Role of Local Government

⁸ Hobsons Bay City Council. (2017). *Mental health services mapping analysis. An analysis of spatial mapping of mental health services for young people in and around Hobsons Bay*



Inclusion of priority populations

Some population groups are more vulnerable to the risk factors which influence mental wellbeing. Given this it is recommended that key population groups, as outlined below, be a focus within the Royal Commission.

Children and young people: More than half of lifetime mental illnesses develop before the age of 14 years. This can result in adverse outcomes such as reduced self-esteem or confidence, reduced educational and occupational opportunities, increased risk of substance abuse, increased family conflict, family breakdown and homelessness.⁹ Research shows that intervening during the early years and adolescence has the most potential to positively influence lifelong mental wellbeing.

Women and girls: Notably, there has been significant gender differences identified regarding the proportion of females (29 per cent) who have ever been diagnosed with depression or anxiety compared to males (20 per cent).¹⁰

People with a disability: The National Disability Insurance Scheme supports people that have a permanent disability, including a psychosocial disability, however access to the system for someone with severe mental health issues and or access for people that might not be classified as having a permanent mental health issue are falling through the gaps. People with a disability should be a key focus within the Royal Commission especially in relation to access to services.

Other key groups: Other community members such as those living in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, those with chronic disease, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and newly arrived people should be separately considered within the Terms of Reference, whilst acknowledging intersectionality.^{11,12, 13,14}

⁹ National Mental Health Commission. (2018). Monitoring mental health and suicide prevention reform: National Report 2018.

¹⁰ Department of Health and Human Services. Victorian Population Health Survey 2016. Selected survey findings

¹¹ VicHealth. VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019.

¹² Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019

¹³ Department of Health. (2014) Factsheet: Mental health services for people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

¹⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018) Australia's Health 2018. Australia's health series no.



Themes important for the Royal Commission to focus on

The Mental Health Royal Commission Establishment is seeking stakeholders to rank the themes provided as to which are the most important focus areas for the Royal Commission into Mental Health. Of the options provided, below is the order of priority:

1. prevention and early intervention
2. social isolation, depression, anxiety and trauma
3. deliverable reform to improve outcomes for people living with a mental illness
4. community health services
5. integration between alcohol and other drugs and mental health services
6. accessibility and navigating the mental health system
7. acute mental health services (mental health assessment and treatment both in hospital and in the community)
8. forensic mental health services (mental health assessment and treatment for people in contact with the criminal justice system)
9. preventing suicide
10. workforce development and retention

Similarly to the People's Mental Health Report in New Zealand,¹⁵ it would be beneficial for the Terms of Reference to specify the inclusion of stories from people who have used or worked in mental health services to identify barriers to accessing care, limitations to the current model of care, and areas for improvement.

Additionally the investigation should explore the barriers of people who experience mental health but are unable to, or choose not to, access mental health services. For example, accessibility issues relating to location of services, lack of affordable integrated transport, stigma attached to mental health status, challenges in initiating treatment and referrals via the mental health care plan.

Customer journey mapping as part of the investigations would assist in identifying 'pain points' that prevent or make it difficult for people to seek mental health care.

Prevention

The themes provided do not adequately explore the social determinants of mental health: social inclusion and connectedness; freedom from violence and discrimination; access to economic resources such as housing, income, education and employment; and urban design elements within the built and natural environment such as natural

¹⁵ Action Station. The People's Mental Health Report. Available at <https://www.peoplesmentalhealthreport.com/>



light and green spaces.^{16,17} Prevention should be a priority of action, along with the service system.

The VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019 describes how “the most powerful influences on mental wellbeing exist in the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with one another”.¹⁸ As such, ecological approaches in addition to individual intervention is thought to be a better option to support people in coping with the challenges to their mental wellbeing.¹⁹ They suggest that assets for resilience in the ecological model can be targeted at different levels:²⁰

- individual strengths (e.g. self-esteem, problem solving, social skills)
- family and friends (e.g. positive family environment, friendship with pro-social peers, respectful relationship with others)
- communities and organisations (e.g. opportunities for social and economic participation, fair and inclusive societies)

It is recommended that the scope of the Terms of Reference include research and evaluation of prevention and health promotion strategies beyond the mental health services system, that address the social determinants of mental health.

Place-based approaches

Place-based approaches and ‘whole of community’ approaches described in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019, is one of the recommended strategies which targets communities in a particular location, focusing on multiple determinants of health and wellbeing such as housing, social isolation, transport, neighbourhood safety and other risk factors to poor health.²¹

It is recommended that the scope of the Terms of Reference investigates the extent place based approaches and whole of community approaches can improve mental health, and put forward recommendations on how government agencies, private, and community organisations can better partner to tackle the socioeconomic determinants of health and wellbeing.

¹⁶ Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. A Plan for Action 2005-2007. Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing.

¹⁷ Townsend, Prof M and Weerasuriya, R, 2010, ‘Beyond Blue to Green: The Health Benefits of Contact with Nature in a Park Context – Literature Review’, Deakin University, Beyond Blue Ltd.

¹⁸ VicHealth. (2015). VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2019, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Department of Health and Human Services. (2015). Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-2019



Next generation

VicHealth commissioned CSIRO to conduct an analysis of new and emerging societal trends that are likely to impact the mental health of young people.²²

In their report, *Bright Futures*, identified five 'megatrends' (long-term change that affects societies, governments or economies permanently over a long period of time). These are further explained in Table 1 below.²³

Table 1: Bright Futures Megatrends

<i>The rising bar</i>	<i>A rise in skill and education levels in emerging economies and increased automation leading to a more competitive, global job market.</i>
<i>Global reach</i>	<i>Globalisation and digital technology creating a breakdown of traditional barriers changing the way workplaces, organisations, societies, governance structures and individuals operate.</i>
<i>Life's richer tapestry</i>	<i>A more diverse culture, society and consumer market where identification of mainstream is increasingly difficult.</i>
<i>Overexposure online</i>	<i>Increasing exposure to wide-ranging online content, privacy breaches and virtual relationships.</i>
<i>Out of the shadows</i>	<i>Improved understanding of mental health and wellbeing coupled with a change in service delivery models.</i>

It is recommended that the scope of the Terms of Reference includes an exploration of how young people can be adequately supported to be skilled, resilient and adaptable to respond to mental health challenges in the near future.

Service delivery and models

Due to the high need amongst young people, Hobsons Bay City Council's youth counselling service was established. This service is of high demand, often resulting in a long waitlist, requiring some young people to access private practitioners (with out of pocket costs) or travel to services outside of Hobsons Bay.²⁴ This may create barriers to access for young people as they may not have the financial means or access to adequate transport to seek care. Additional services and support to meet the current and future need in Hobsons Bay is required, as well as adopting strategies to address the socioeconomic influences on mental health.

²² VicHealth. *Bright Futures: Megatrends impacting the mental wellbeing of young Victorians over the coming 20 years.*

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Hobsons Bay City Council. (2015) *Mental Health and Wellbeing in Hobsons Bay: Scoping Paper. The Role of Local Government*



The scope of the Terms of Reference should include investigation into population service ratios and models of service delivery that is holistic and adaptable for communities (e.g. one stop shop, and satellite services).