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| Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce strategy 2021–2024  Summary |

# A bold vision for reform

A modern mental health and wellbeing system relies on a workforce built and supported by contemporary thinking and inspired by a vision of reform.

*Victoria’s mental health and wellbeing workforce strategy 2021–2024* sets out a coordinated and strategic approach to deliver the diverse, skilled and multidisciplinary workforce required for Victoria’s reformed mental health and wellbeing system.

The strategy identifies priorities for the future of the mental health and wellbeing workforce, builds on the system’s highly capable workforce base to meet the most urgent challenges, and lays the foundations for implementing recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System to deliver improved outcomes for Victorians.

The Royal Commission’s vision for an integrated and responsive mental health system will be realised through the knowledge, skills and attributes of a workforce built and supported to work collaboratively with, and to meet the needs of, Victorians. In new and existing services, settings and roles, the mental health and wellbeing workforce will shape reform through new ways of connecting, leading, teaching and learning.

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting, nurturing, enabling and growing the workforce – this strategy is a major step towards building a sustainable workforce for the future system.

# Key priorities

The strategy sets out four priorities for the future of the mental health and wellbeing workforce, along with actions to build the mental health and wellbeing workforce that Victoria needs.

| Priority | Action areas |
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| Priority 1: Building workforce supply | 1a: Attracting people to mental health careers  1b: Growing graduate, post-qualifying and transition training pathways  1c: Building emergent and new workforces  1d: Ensuring workforce meets regional needs |
| Priority 2: Building workforce skills, knowledge and capabilities | 2a: Ensuring education and training meets the needs of the community  2b: Embedding a system wide capability focus  2c: Improving capability through ongoing training opportunities  2d: Ensuring workforce reflects and responds to diverse communities |
| Priority 3: Supporting the safety, wellbeing and retention of the mental health and wellbeing workforce | 3a: Establishing workforce wellbeing monitoring and supports |
| Priority 4: Building system enablers for excellence in workforce | 4a: Improving system planning and sustainability  4b: Shaping the workforce for the future |

# Principles for workforce reform

Five principles will guide the design and delivery of workforce reforms.

**Sustainable and responsive approaches to system growth ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­–** Changing needs and future growth are planned for by building rewarding and supportive career pathways – from training to retirement – across disciplines, settings and functions.

**Culture of partnerships, collaboration and innovation ­–** Collaborative partnerships across workforces, organisations, and services and sectors drive seamless transitional care for consumers, as well as career progression and lifelong learning opportunities for workers.

**Treatment, care and support is provided by diverse, multidisciplinary teams ­–** Multidisciplinary, consumer-centred care is the standard approach to care, treatment and support, providing opportunities for both specialist and generalist skillsets across disciplines.

**Working environments are supportive, safe and rewarding ­–** Victoria’s mental health workplaces are attractive, supportive, safe and rewarding, with positive cultures that respect and value workers and build passion for a lifelong career.

**Reforms support workforce opportunities and satisfaction ­–** System reform and program implementation across all priorities of the strategy encourage and support lifelong public mental health careers by focusing on the needs, challenges and aspirations of the workforce.

# Investing in the future of the workforce

The workforce is critical to the delivery of safe, effective and compassionate care to consumers and their families, carers and supporters. The strategy outlines immediate and medium- to longer-term actions against each key priority to address workforce challenges and lay the foundations for change, with implementation of new funded actions to commence from January 2022 on critical stabilising initiatives.

The Victorian Government is committed to reforming the system and workforce and has committed **$269 million to supporting workforce reform.**

This includes **$41 million in new initiatives** for *Victoria's mental health and wellbeing workforce strategy 2021–2024* which will provide **358 full-time equivalent positions** across the mental health system. These new initiatives build on the **$228 million** previously invested through the 2020-21 and 2021-22 Victorian State Budgets, which provided approximately 580 new entry-to-mental health positions for nurses, lived experience workers and allied health roles.

This **$269 million** investment includes:

* **$70 million** to support up to **120 graduate mental health nurses** and supporting nurse educators each year
* **$40.7 million** to support and grow the consumer and carer **lived experience workforces,** including support for 30 peer cadets each year
* **$39.4 million** in funding to support **60 allied health graduates** annually, with an additional **41 graduates** and eight educators funded to boost critical supply in 2022
* **$37.4 million** to continue training up to **575** of Victoria’s junior doctors in **foundational mental health skills**
* **$30 million** annually for workforce development for the mental health and AOD workforces
* **$12.2 million** for a training program for experienced allied health and nurse clinicians to transition into mental health with up to **50 nurses**, **30 allied health** training positions and supporting educator roles funded
* **$10.5 million** for the rural and regional workforce incentive program
* **$8 million** to provide students the opportunity to work and start building careers in mental healthalongside their study
* **$4.6 million** for a new enrolled nurse pipeline, with **40 enrolled nurses** and eight educators trained in mental health in 2022
* **$4.5 million** investment in capacity building programs for the psychiatry training pipeline, including **a new training group**, continued support of **mandatory training placements** and new **Directors of Training**, including for addiction psychiatry and rural and regional services in 2022
* **$3.7 million** to attract people to mental health careers
* **$1.3 million** for up to **70 postgraduate scholarships**, including 20 to AOD practitioners in 2022 to undertake postgraduate training such as a Graduate Certificate in Mental Health
* **$0.6 million capability training program** to implement the Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework.

This significant funding boost will support early reform in what will be a ten-year journey – one that is ambitious and builds momentum over time. The work must balance the scale and time required for lasting reform with the urgency required to deal with current system challenges. This investment is an important step towards a sustainable workforce that is supported to thrive in rewarding and engaging environments, and towards delivering the mental health and wellbeing system that Victorians need and deserve.

# Implementing the strategy

The strategy leverages the experience, responsiveness and expertise of the sector to build on proven initiatives, but also to create more opportunities for innovation that will require further collaboration, testing and evaluation – and input from both the mental health and wellbeing workforce and lived experience voices. The Victorian Government will refresh the strategy every two years so it can reflect the changing needs of the system, the community, and of the mental health and wellbeing workforce.

## An approach based on learning, innovation and collaboration

Implementation of workforce reforms will be underpinned by collaborative design approaches with the diverse voices of the community, clinical, community, and lived and living experience workforces, and the voices of consumers, families, carers and supporters.

## Measuring progress against outcomes

The Victorian Government will deliver outcomes-driven workforce reform. Work is underway to develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Performance Framework as recommended by the Royal Commission in its final report. This work will allow progress against key outcomes to be tracked, and to measure the impact of initiatives to build workforce supply, capability and wellbeing and of system enablers.

## Communicating progress

Regular updates will be provided as these vital workforce reforms are delivered, and regular and ongoing feedback will be sought from the sector. Significant milestones, announcements and opportunities will be shared through the Department of Health’s [mental health reform website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-reform) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-reform>, as well as through direct emails to key partners and stakeholders.

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