



**9.1 VICTORIAN MENTAL HEALTH ROYAL COMMISSION**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER: TONY KEENAN, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**PREPARED BY: MARY MCGORRY, MANAGER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To provide a submission to the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health Services as part of the consultation phase on behalf of the residents of the City of Port Phillip. (Terms of Reference form Attachment 1).
- 1.2 A draft submission is attached (Attachment 2).
- 1.3 The community consultation phase for the Royal Commission began on 5 April 2019 and it will receive submissions throughout April and May 2019 for the first phase.

**2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Mental ill-health is the leading cause of disability in young people aged 10–24 years, contributing 55 per cent of their overall burden of disease. Ref: Australian Institution of Health and Well-Being (2011) Young Australians: their health and wellbeing. Cat. no. PHE 140, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra).
- 2.2 Dr Sebastian Rosenberg from the Australian National University's Centre for Mental Health Research states: "Mental health services that exist between the GP and the front door of the public hospital are basically non-existent."
- 2.3 The Victorian Auditor General Office's report on Mental Health Services (March 2019) finds that 45% of Victorians will experience mental illness in some form in their lifetime. Every year, one in five Victorians experiences some form of mental illness or disorder.
- 2.4 This Report notes "...increasing and sustained demand pressure on services has not been matched with increasing resources. Shifting population and growth has left some services under even greater pressure. The result is longer waiting times to access services and higher thresholds for entry. The increased pressure on services creates a risk that people may receive treatment that is less timely, less intensive and shorter in duration than they want or need." [Access to Mental Health Services | Victorian Auditor-General's Office](#)
- 2.5 Each year in Victoria, there are about 20,000 suicide attempts and in 2016, for example, there were 624 deaths by suicide which is more than twice the road toll.
- 2.6 The proportion of young Victorians receiving clinical mental health care is almost 50 per cent below the national average. This means Victoria is missing the opportunity to intervene early in a person's life to help build resilience and reduce the downward trajectory towards serious mental health issues. Ref: Mental Health Victoria (2018) Saving Lives, Saving Money – The Case for Better Investment in Victorian Mental Health.
- 2.7 Two decades ago, Victoria had the highest per capita expenditure on mental health services in the country. Victoria is now spending the least per person on mental health in the country. Victoria is now 13 per cent below the national average and access to mental health services is nearly 40 per cent below the national average.



- 2.8 The concern from people experiencing mental illness, their carers and families, as well as advocates and the peak body Mental Health Victoria, about the deteriorating state of mental health services because of significant funding withdrawal over this period led to the State Government commitment to convene a Royal Commission and implement all of its findings.

### 3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council instructs officers to:

- 3.1 Lodge the attached submission with the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health Services during May 2019.
- 3.2 Provide a copy to the Minister for Mental Health, and local member for Albert Park, The Hon. Martin Foley MP.

### 4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The City of Port Phillip has a higher proportion of residents reporting a life time prevalence of anxiety/depression than the Victorian average (31.2% as opposed to 18.4%).
- 4.2 It has a higher percentage of the adult population who have sought help for a mental health problem in the previous 12 months (18.4% versus 16%).
- 4.3 Compared with the Victorian average, Port Phillip has a lower proportion of young people who feel they can access mental health services when needed 58,7 versus 70.4% (HWIS 2017).
- 4.4 There is substantial evidence linking homelessness and housing insecurity with significant negative impacts on physical and mental health outcomes.
- 4.5 There is evidence that people sleeping rough are much more likely to experience serious mental health problems, a background of multiple traumas and higher levels of substance misuse and family violence. The City of Port Phillip rooming houses and supported residential services accommodate a group of residents with high levels of chronic mental illnesses, dual or multiple diagnoses and resultant complex needs.
- 4.6 The City of Port Phillip has the second highest rate of alcohol-related hospitalisations and the highest rate of alcohol-related ambulance attendances in the Southern Region, and the second highest pharmaceutical-related ambulance attendance rate in the Southern Region. It also has the highest illicit drug-related hospitalisation and ambulance attendance rates in the Southern Region.
- 4.7 Victoria's mental health services from two decades ago included home treatment teams (also known as crisis assessment and treatment or CAT), early intervention services, assertive outreach dual diagnosis teams and intensive case management. These teams were replicated around the world given their strong evidence base and positive outcomes.
- 4.8 The Melbourne Age article "Nothing between the GP and Emergency" (26 March 2019) quotes the community mental health system has been steadily eroded, with resources diverted to strained emergency departments.



- 4.9 Last year's state budget committed a much-needed \$705 million to mental health but most of this will be directed to acute services, where chaotic emergency departments and psychiatric wards try to cope with the growing demand. Acute bed numbers have fallen 9 per cent in the past decade.
- 4.10 The article also reports that accessing an appointment with public Community Mental Health services now takes weeks, sometimes months. "Community mental health is very much geared to individuals who have a serious and complex need," Angus Clelland, Mental Health Victoria.
- 4.11 Figures reported by Mental Health Victoria show 3% of Victorian adults experience severe mental illness each year but only about 1% of them are receiving clinical mental health care. That means that 2 out of 3 people who are seriously mentally ill do not receive treatment. Comparisons have been made, by advocates, that if 2 out of 3 people with advanced cancers or heart disease were not treated, there would be public outrage.
- 4.12 STAR Health locally deliver the federally funded Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMS) but this will be defunded shortly. The department will continue to fund a small amount into 2019-20 to cover clients who have not yet had their NDIS eligibility tested. The future National Psychosocial Support Measure and the Continuity of Support Programs are about to go to tender via the South East Melbourne Primary Health Network. These will not be equivalent to or as large as the former PHaMS.
- 4.13 Most worryingly STAR Health's assertive mental health outreach and our other state funded mental health community support are being defunded as clients transition to NDIS. There is nothing equivalent to replace these, although the much smaller Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Service (EIPS) has been funded to Star Health and Sacred Heart Mission from the Alfred to provide psychosocial supports to Alfred mental health service clients. This is far smaller in size than the MHCCSS services.

## **5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS**

STAR Health have been consulted as well as services from across Council including Local Laws, Animal Management, Arts.

## **6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications of Council providing this submission.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no financial impact on Council in providing this submission.

Mental Health Victoria, has laid out the economic case for investing in mental health. It estimates at least \$543 million more is needed to fix mental health by 2022 to bring Victoria in line with the average national spend. And it finds that spending this amount will mean health and productivity savings of \$1.1 billion over the term.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

There is no environmental impact in providing this submission.

## **9. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The submission would have the intent of articulating, to the Commissioners, the impact of the lack of funding for community mental health services in the City of Port Phillip to improve



health outcomes for residents of the City of Port Phillip and is aligned to the Council Plan and Health and Well Being Strategy.

**10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY**

Providing this submission is in keeping with both the Council Plan Strategic Direction 1 – We embrace difference and people belong, as well as the Health and Wellbeing Implementation Strategy addressing belonging and social inclusion.

**11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

**11.1 Timeline**

If the submission is endorsed by Council, offers will submit it and provide a copy to Martin Foley, Minister for Mental Health and local member for Albert Park.

**11.2 Communication**

STAR Health and First Steps will be made aware of the submission.

**12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST**

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

**TRIM FILE NO:**

**02/01/220**

**ATTACHMENTS**

- 1. Mental Health Royal Commission Terms of Reference**
- 2. Submission to the Royal Commission for Mental Health**