



## **VICTORIA'S MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM PROVIDERS WELCOME FUNDS WITH NOTE OF CAUTION**

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01am Monday 22 February 2021

VICTORIA'S mental health service providers face challenges of workforce shortages, including change management leadership, even as a welcome influx of funds boosts new programs and beds, says the author of a Perspective published by the Medical Journal of Australia today.

Associate Professor Steven Moylan, Clinical Director of Barwon Health, wrote that "careful planning is required to ensure new resources for mental health lead to better consume care".

"After years of stagnation, in 2020 Victorian mental health services experienced some funding growth," he wrote.

"These resources have allowed our team to strengthen existing services; bring on new staff, including expanding our lived experience workforce; and initiate new programs, including the Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) initiative, intensive community packages of care, the pre-hospital response of mental health and paramedic team (PROMPT), and a mental health, alcohol and other drugs hub in our emergency department.

"Such an inundation is welcome, but not without its own risks and challenges."

Associate Professor Moylan detailed those challenges:

- Human resources - insufficient mental health nurses and psychiatrists, particularly in regional and rural areas;
- Leadership capacity and competency in change management - "for leaders already managing the challenge of daily operations, additional responsibilities to enact significant reform quickly carries a risk of overload";
- Engaging stakeholders meaningfully - "enacting multiple reforms quickly carries the risk that meaningful stakeholder engagement may be sacrificed; for this reason, timelines for delivery need to balance urgency with getting things right".

"Significant investment in training and recruitment pathways are required to prevent workforce shortages becoming a barrier to the pace of reform," wrote Associate Professor Moylan.

"Diversification of disciplines, grades and programs that encourage qualified staff to enter mental health care will all be required.

"As the pace of desired reform increases, a focus on developing current and future mental health leaders should be prioritised."



**MJA**

The Medical Journal of Australia

Media Release

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System called for "transformational change".

"The pace of this change and the other challenges involved must be managed carefully by system leaders to ensure that the intended reform occurs and results in provision of better care to the community," Associate Professor Moylan concluded.

All MJA media releases are open access and can be found at:

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/media>

**Please remember to credit *The MJA*.**

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

---

*The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.*

CONTACTS: Associate Professor Steve Moylan  
Clinical Director  
Barwon Health  
Email: [steven.moylan@barwonhealth.org.au](mailto:steven.moylan@barwonhealth.org.au)

Communication and Marketing  
Barwon Health  
Email: [comms@BarwonHealth.org.au](mailto:comms@BarwonHealth.org.au)