

Chapter 3 A system focused on outcomes

Recommendation 1: Supporting good mental health and wellbeing

The Royal Commission recommends that the Victorian Government:

- Develop a *Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework* to drive collective responsibility and accountability for mental health and wellbeing outcomes across government portfolios
- Through a newly established *Mental Health and Wellbeing Cabinet Subcommittee*, chaired by the Premier, use the Framework to monitor outcomes to inform planning and policy decisions
- Use the Framework as a mechanism to inform government investment processes and assess the benefits, including the economic benefits, of early intervention
- Update the Framework and publicly report on progress against outcomes at a service, system and population level, every year

The Commission's vision for a new approach to outcomes

The Commission calls for a new, comprehensive *Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework* to drive transformational system reform. The new framework will “measure the things that are most important to people” and focus on wellbeing and the social determinants of mental health (p. 99). It will adopt a broad view of mental health and wellbeing outcomes at individual and population levels. Its intention is to improve planning and investment decisions, ensure greater government and provider accountability by focusing on the value delivered rather than solely on outputs, and provide for the system to adapt over time.

The importance of a whole-of-system and whole-of-government approach to the new framework is emphasised by the Commission in order to improve collaborative decision making across government departments and portfolios and align system efforts toward common goals. A greater focus on outcomes in the commissioning of services is also highlighted, particularly in relation to long term investment approaches and planning around prevention activities and services.

At its core, the new framework will support “collective stewardship” of the entire system, as well as ensure individual organisational accountability.

The Commission's overarching vision for reform in the *guiding principles*

The Commission's overarching vision for reform outlined in the *guiding principles* (p. 76) is to be used as the foundation for the development of the Framework. Significantly, families are referred to in the guiding principles, as follows:

The Commission envisages a mental health and wellbeing system in which:

Family members, carers and supporters of people living with mental illness or psychological distress have their contributions recognised and supported (Guiding Principle 2).

People with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress, family members, carers and supporters, as well as local communities, are central to the planning and delivery of mental health treatment, care and support services (Guiding Principle 6).

The Commission highlights the pivotal role families will play in the development of the Framework. Agreement on the Framework will be through consultation with various parties.

“Current whole-of-system and whole-of-government input is required [on the development of the new framework], as is leadership from people with lived experience of mental illness or psychological distress, and the expertise of families, carers and supporters, mental health and wellbeing services, other social and related services, researchers and the workforce.” (p. 116)

Recommended design features of the new framework

The Commission recommends the following design features in the development of the new framework.

Must be developed *with* people, not *for* people

A broad range of people must inform the development of the Framework – a broad representation from those who use, work in, regulate, fund and oversee the system. The Commission states: “*It is crucial that the framework be created in partnership with consumers, families, carers and supporters*” and that outcomes “*reflect what matters most to the people who are the beneficiaries of the service or system*” (p. 106).

Must take a broad view of mental health and wellbeing

It must consider the social determinants of mental health and wellbeing and a community’s own perspective on what contributes to good mental health and wellbeing.

Must draw on diverse information inputs

Traditional population health and service performance measures must be combined with other information “to provide a rich and accurate picture of the impact of investment decisions and service interventions”; for example, consumer and carer satisfaction surveys, workforce surveys, and economic analyses of wellbeing (p. 106).

Include regular reporting requirements, including public reporting to drive accountability

The Commission states the Framework “will represent a *public commitment* to the vision for a transformed system” (p. 105).

Adopt a whole-of-system lens that informs the decisions and activities of service providers, governments and the wider community

The Framework is intended to guide decisions, including for investment, by providing government and services with an evidence base for ‘what works’. It is to provide “a clear picture of the quality and

effectiveness of treatment, care and support provided by services, as well as the impact of those services on the mental health and wellbeing of the population” (p. 107).

Furthermore, its aim is to influence the wider community; to “harness and unify the efforts of non-government organisations, entrepreneurs, businesses, local community groups, schools and individuals to contribute to outcomes” (p. 107).

Recommended outcome domains

The Commission recommends adopting the 5 board outcome domains recommended in the [Productivity Commission’s report](#) as a starting point for the new framework. They are:

- (1) Thriving, not just surviving
- (2) Ensuring effective care, support and treatment
- (3) Engaging in meaningful activity
- (4) Maintaining connections with family, friends, community and culture
- (5) Feeling safe, stable and secure

Within the Framework, there will be more specific outcome domains for service delivery as part of a new *performance monitoring and accountability framework* that will provide “a clear and consistent set of expectations for service delivery”, which are “appropriate, effective, connected, safe, accessible” and delivers value (p. 109). Outcomes and indicators must be framed by a person-centred approach, and measurements covering the *full cycle of care*.

[Table 3.3 \(p. 111\)](#) and [Figure 3.2 \(p. 112\)](#) are examples provided by the Commission to guide further development on the Framework.

The Commission explains focusing on outcomes at the individual level will contribute to reducing health disparities, and measurement of outcomes at a population level will ascertain whether people are well supported in their community, including at-risk groups. With well-designed targets, this will ensure mental health remains front-and-centre of the Government’s agenda, as well as assist with prioritisation of activities, to drive a more balanced approach to service delivery and investment (p. 115).

Oversight and responsibility for the Framework

The Commission outlines multiple government departments and agencies will be required to work together to establish the Framework, inclusive of the Department of Health, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Treasury and Finance, and the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.

The Commission states, as a new impartial body responsible for holding the Government to account on system performance, quality and safety, the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission* should monitor the new framework, and will be “well placed to report annually on progress” (p. 117).

Alignment with the Commonwealth’s framework

The Commission calls for a common set of outcomes at the state and national levels to support ‘one system’ and coordinated action across levels of government. The Commission recommends, going

forward, the goal of the Department of Health “should be to work with the Commonwealth, as part of a shared agenda and future agreements on mental health, to expand uniform state and national outcome measurements” (p. 120).

Using the Framework for system transformation

For the Framework to be effective, it must be applied using a whole-of-system and whole-of-government approach. The Commission uses whole-of-system to refer to the broader system, encompassing not only public sector bodies and organisations at the federal, state and local government levels, but “all people and organisations who participate in – or are connected with – the new mental health and wellbeing system” (p. 121).

The Commission outlines, as follows, the key ways the new framework will be applied to support the development of the new system:

Inform decision making

The Outcomes Framework will be used to help decision makers understand if their actions are delivering the best results for individuals and the population. To this end, new bodies, structures and entities across the system will need to actively use the Framework within their operational and executive governance arrangements to plan and make decisions.

Inform commissioning decisions

The Commission states deliberate resourcing approaches must occur throughout the reformed system, and the new framework will be pivotal in guiding this.

“Measuring individual consumer outcomes will be instrumental in supporting new ways of funding and commissioning across the entire mental health and wellbeing system. These new approaches will focus on value and outcomes rather than just activity and outputs.” (p. 129)

Drive improvement and enhance confidence in the system

The new framework will encourage collaboration by creating “a collective sense of purpose, importance and direction” (p. 130). The transparent use of outcomes will help direct reform activities and provide “a shared view as to whether reforms are being achieved” (p. 130).

Effective collaboration will be key to the system’s improvement and evolution over time. Shared learning and the ability of the system to adapt will be critical. To facilitate this, clear and transparent reporting of the Framework will be required.

Measures of the Framework must be reported annually and be provided regularly to the Cabinet Subcommittee. The new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission must also generate regular reports for community service providers and government institutions to inform decision making.

The Framework must not just be used as an internal tool, but rather shared and communicated broadly “to provide information, influence behaviour and enable deliberation, collaboration and learning” (p.

132). This transparency “will promote engagement and strengthen confidence in the system”, particularly for consumers and their families, carers and supporters (p. 132).