

Chapter 4 Working together to support good mental health and wellbeing

Recommendation 2: Governance arrangements for promoting good mental health and preventing mental illness

The Royal Commission recommends that the Victorian Government:

- Establish within the Mental Health and Wellbeing Division, a *Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office*, led by a Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Adviser, who reports to the Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Enable the Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office to develop and coordinate a state-wide approach to mental health promotion and prevention that:
 - delivers the economic and social benefits of good mental health and wellbeing across the population;
 - is informed by public health principles;
 - promotes and is informed by human rights; and
 - focuses on reducing inequities in mental health and wellbeing outcomes

Transforming the approach to mental health promotion and prevention in Victoria

The Commission states there is “a significant opportunity in Victoria to establish a renewed public health approach to mental health and wellbeing as a core element of the future mental health and wellbeing system” (p. 175). To make a significant difference, it will take “enhanced investment into prevention and promotion, improved coordination of these efforts and strengthening the position of mental health in public health activity” (p. 175).

The Commission calls for the Victorian Government, as a matter of priority, to adopt “a public health and human rights approach to underpin mental health promotion and prevention activity” (p. 175). To achieve this, the Commission recommends the establishment of a dedicated *Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office* to lead and coordinate a state-wide and cross-sector approach to prevention and promotion, with the goal of the office being “to improve mental health and wellbeing for the entire population”, including those experiencing mental health challenges (p. 176).

The Commission recommends the new office be located inside the new *Mental Health and Wellbeing Division* in the Department of Health, to support integrated planning and delivery, and strengthen the capacity to drive whole-of-government prevention and promotion activity. The new office will be led by a *Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Adviser*, who will oversee operations and lead cross-sector and whole-of-government engagement in prevention and promotion.

[Table 4.1 \(p. 178 vol. 1\)](#) outlines in detail the *functions and priority activities* of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office.

[Figure 4.7 \(p. 179 vol. 1\)](#) outlines in detail *governance arrangements* for prevention and mental health promotion, reflecting a whole-of-government approach.

Dedicated funding for mental health promotion and prevention

The Commission calls for the Victorian Government to establish dedicated funding for mental health promotion and prevention efforts.

To determine and protect funding, the Commission recommends the Government “consider the merits of setting the funding amount in legislation”, or alternatively, set “a target for the proportion of the total mental health budget allocated explicitly to prevention activities via the Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office” (p. 180). If the latter approach is adopted, the Commission recommends the Government ensure this is “consistently incorporated through consecutive budget cycles and performance recorded in budget papers” (p. 180). Either way, the Commission states, funding should be sufficient to support universal and long term strategies, as well as more immediate priorities.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office will be responsible for distributing funding for mental health promotion and prevention activities, focusing on the priority areas.

The Commission identifies *three priority areas for funding* (p. 181):

- *Prevention programs*: to increase the scale, reach and longevity of evidence-based programs.
- *Research, evidence and knowledge translation*: including strengthening the evaluation and evidence base for prevention; conducting economic modelling; forecasting future trends that affect mental health and wellbeing; and producing resources to guide practitioners and policymakers.
- *Partnerships*: engaging a range of partners in prevention across government, non-government and private sectors, brokering partnerships and leading collaborative projects.

State-wide plan for mental health promotion and prevention

The Commission outlines the Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office’s key priority to lead the development of a new ‘*State-wide Plan for the Promotion of Good Mental Health and Wellbeing and the Prevention of Mental Illness*’.

Complimenting existing plans, the new plan will “strengthen mental health promotion across all the settings and sectors that are outside the mental health and wellbeing system” and will “provide direction for a diverse range of peak bodies and key agencies to align to a common set of mental health and wellbeing objectives” (p. 181). It will describe how settings and sectors “can benefit from increasing their role in prevention and promotion and provide a framework for their approach” (p. 181).

The Commission’s vision is that the plan will reflect input from, and strengthen the role of, regional networks and agencies in prevention and promotion, and states it will require “specific allocation of resources” for planning, partnerships, delivery and monitoring (p. 181).

Aligning with the new *Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework*, the State-wide Plan will include objectives and indicators specific to prevention and promotion. It is further recommended the Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Office publish biannual progress reports on the Plan, with oversight from the new *Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission*.