



Fact Sheet

Families, carers and supporters

There are

60,000 Victorians

caring for an adult living with mental illness and about 9,000 of these are young carers¹

The Commission estimated that

\$3.7 billion

worth of unpaid care

is provided annually in Victoria by families and carers (\$3.1 billion after accounting for welfare payments)²

Research suggests that approximately



of children live with a parent who has a mental illness³

Many families, carers and supporters have shared their stories with the Commission. These are stories of dedication to the people they care for and support, and stories of a system that is failing to meet people's needs. They are also stories about hope for a better future.

Families, carers and supporters have much to contribute to a future mental health and wellbeing system, with lived experience knowledge gained from years (sometimes decades) of navigating a complex system—and for many, a passion and personal commitment to making the system better for others in the future.



there were so many opportunities along the way for our family to be connected with services and supported. I feel that these opportunities were missed and turned into disasters. If we had been supported earlier on, it would have been better for both Matthew and our family.⁴

- Erin Davies

The future mental health and wellbeing system will acknowledge that most consumers have relationships of care and support, and that these relationships play an important role in wellbeing and recovery.

Involving families, carers and supporters in care and recovery will become standard practice for all services, and an expectation from the government when commissioning providers.

Families, carers and supporters across the state will also have access to dedicated supports, including from eight family- and carer-led centres, and young carers will have access to tailored and intensive supports.



our daughter ... was too unwell to go into the private system and too well to go into the public system ... And that was absolutely traumati[s]ing.

We just had to watch her get sicker and sicker and sicker. And we're completely powerless to do anything about it. And that was a situation I hope no-one else ever gets into.⁵

- Human-centred design focus group participant



I have accepted that I must carry the burden of being an only child who cares for his Mum. At least now I am able to do so with the support I've always needed.⁶

- Justin Heazlewood

Recommendations



8 family and carer led centres across Victoria



A substantial increase in brokerage funding for families and carers, including young carers



A statewide peer call-back service for families, carers and supporters caring for someone who may be having suicidal thoughts



Tailored online information for families, carers and supporters



Fund an organisation to expand the range of supports available to young carers and children and young people who have a family member living with mental illness or psychological distress



Broaden the scope of the Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness Program and give young carers access to support workers



Strengthen identification and referral pathways for young carers through the mental health and wellbeing and education systems



Ensure that working with families, carers and supporters is an expectation of mental health and wellbeing services



Develop key roles across the mental health and wellbeing system for people with lived experience as family members and carers



The new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission will elevate the leadership and promote the valued role of family members and carers throughout the mental health and wellbeing system



Establish a Commissioner with family or carer lived experience in the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission



Develop standards to guide information sharing



Include family, carer and community inclusive values and approaches in the future Mental Health Workforce Capability Framework



Increase the number of family and carer peer workers across the system

Victoria can potentially have a world class mental health system. This system must be safe, inclusive, fair and well-funded.

It must challenge the stigma that those with mental health issues and their carers face. It must have the resources to address all people's issues and to ensure that families and friends are seen as a critical part of the team that treat and manage mental health issues.⁷

- Tandem

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, *Victoria's Mental Health Services Annual Report 2019–20*, 2020, p. 34.

² Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, *Interim Report*, 2019, p. 366.

³ Ingrid Zechmeister-Koss and others, 'Supporting Children Who Have a Parent with a Mental Illness in Tyrol: A Situational Analysis for Informing Co-Development and Implementation of Practice Changes', *BMC Health Services Research*, 20:326 (2020), 1–15 (p. 2).

⁴ *Witness Statement of 'Erin Davies' (pseudonym)*, 1 July 2020, para. 81.

⁵ RCMHS, *Carers Human-Centred Design Focus Group—Melbourne, Session 12: Record of Proceedings*, 2019.

⁶ *Witness Statement of Justin Heazlewood*, 22 April 2020, para. 58.

⁷ Tandem, *Submission to the RCMHS: SUB.0002.0030.0088*, 2019, p. 3.

To read the final report go to rcvmhs.vic.gov.au.