



a fairer victoria achievements so far

Strategy Eleven Increasing support for mental health services

strategy eleven

Increasing support for mental health services

Aim

Better support and better services can make a big difference to the lives of those with a mental illness and their families, allowing them to continue to take part in day to day life. This is particularly true in the early stages of mental illness. The Victorian Government is providing an unprecedented increase in funding for mental health services, recognising that this has long been an under-resourced part of our health system.

Sharper Government focus

By establishing Victoria's first Minister for Mental Health, we are making sure there is a single point of coordination and responsibility within Government for mental health issues. The Minister is supported by a new Mental Health and Drugs Division within the Department of Human Services. In addition, we continue to take a leading role in the implementation of mental health reform as part of our commitment to the Council of Australian Governments' *National Mental Health Action Plan 2006-11*.

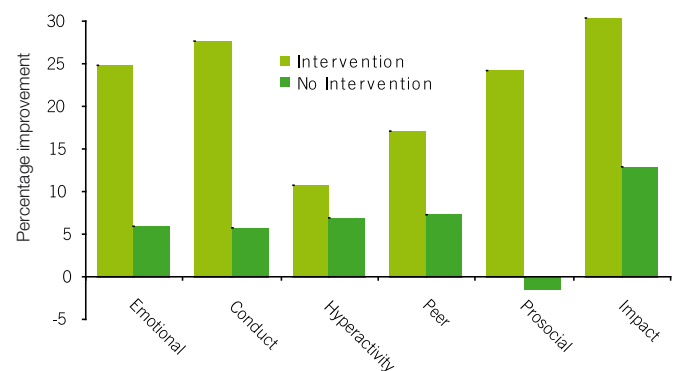
Early intervention and prevention

We have increased our effort in early intervention. Behavioral disturbance in early childhood can indicate the development of mental illness in adolescence and early adulthood. Early intervention can improve the chance of recovery, reduce the severity of mental illness, and over the longer term reduce the individual, social and economic costs of mental health problems.

The *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)* and *School Early Action (CASEA)* initiatives are school-based programs that support children aged between five and eight who show disturbed behaviour, and their families and teachers. Under A Fairer Victoria, we have:

- significantly improved results for children receiving CAMHS and CASEA interventions – the chart to the right shows how much symptoms can improve through CASEA, and
- extended the CAMHS and CASEA initiatives to 113 schools over five regions across Victoria.

Percentage improvement in symptoms comparing children receiving CASEA intervention with children receiving no intervention



"I think the program is excellent. It helps to develop children's self esteem in a fun, positive way. I feel it helped parents/carers as well, giving them a feeling that they are being heard and supported. I thought the staff PD sessions were great and informative. They have helped me become more consciously aware of the way I react to negative behaviours even with the children not in the program. It actually helped one child in my class (who was in the program) to smile more!!"

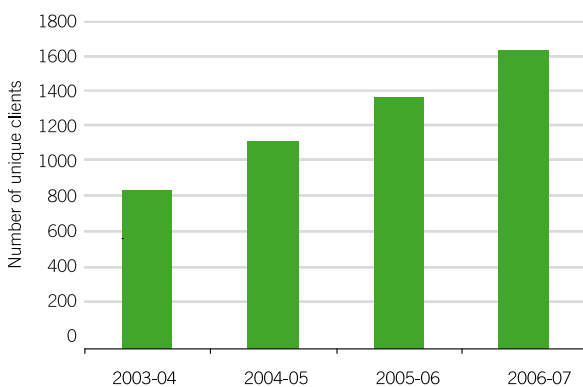
Comment from a teacher in school in Grampians region conducting the CAMHS and Schools Together (CAST), part of the CASEA program

Psychosis causes intense suffering and distress to young adults and their families. If left untreated, it can herald a lifelong course of illness and disability, and increase the risk of suicide. *The Youth Early Psychosis (YEP)* program – an important part of the range of services that specialist mental health services provide to young people with a mental illness – provides more intensive support and treatment during the critical early phase of a psychotic illness. The State Government has quadrupled funding for this program to \$7.9 million since 2003/04, allowing us to:

- assist more than 1,600 young people in 2006/07, and
- establish four new *YEP* services in 2007/08 to cover the catchment areas of the Alfred, Austin Health, St. Vincent’s Health, and Melbourne’s Northern Area Mental Health Service, so *YEP* services are now being delivered at more than 25 sites.

The chart below shows the increase in the number of *YEP* clients since the program was first funded in 2003/04. With new *YEP* services still coming on line, the program is expected to reach full capacity in 2008/09.

Growth in *YEP* clients



Postnatal depression is a serious and debilitating condition experienced by around 14 per cent of new mothers. It affects the wellbeing of women and their children. We are ensuring that nurses and medical practitioners who work with new mothers are adequately trained so that postnatal depression can be recognised early, and measures to address it undertaken quickly. We have:

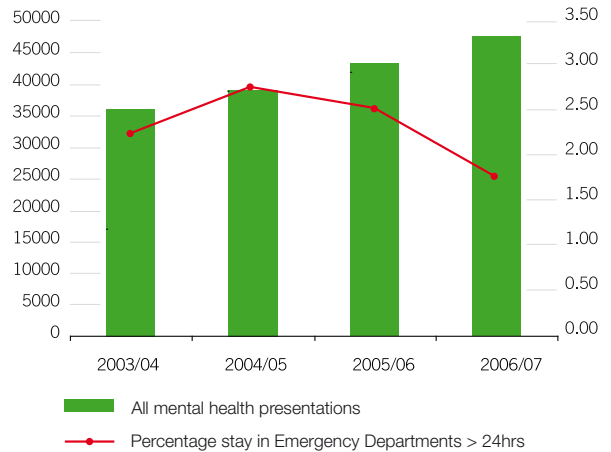
- increased the capacity for outreach at Southern Health, Austin Health, and Werribee Mercy for mothers suffering post-natal mental illness
- increased counselling for new mothers through 19 community health centres across the state, and
- supported the establishment of a Centre for Women’s Mental Health at the Royal Women’s Hospital, so it can become a centre for excellence in mental health issues of particular importance for women, including post natal depression.

Reduced length of stay in emergency departments

Mental health presentations to hospital emergency departments have progressively increased over the past several years, as has been the case for all presentations. In response we have increased investment in specialised mental health support to emergency departments. This has resulted in a decrease in waiting times in emergency departments for people presenting with mental health issues in 2006/07, with 359 fewer people staying more than 24 hours in an emergency department than was the case in 2004/05. In addition, more people are getting a mental health bed within eight hours.

In 2006/07, we created a total of 15 additional mental health positions in the emergency departments of the Barwon, Bendigo, Mildura, Austin, Northern, Alfred, Werribee Mercy, Sunshine and Royal Children's Hospitals. This follows on the availability of specialist mental health clinicians at the hospital emergency departments of the Western, Werribee, Royal Melbourne, Northern, St Vincent's, Monash and Dandenong Hospitals.

Number of mental health presentations and length of stay in Emergency Departments



Expanded mental health facilities and services

Establishing and redeveloping mental health facilities plays a key role in improving mental health.

We have delivered 40 additional prevention and recovery care places across the state to provide intensive short-term, sub-acute care for patients recovering from an acute phase of illness who are not ready to return home. The 40 places are distributed between Box Hill, Springvale, Shepparton and South Yarra.

We have also provided:

- a new ten place prevention and recovery care service in Geelong
- a new ten place prevention and recovery care service in Bendigo
- a new prevention and recovery care service in Gippsland
- 10 new beds at the Regina Coeli facility in North Melbourne
- a new 25 bed mental health unit at Casey Hospital, and
- 15 additional aged residential beds at the McKellar Centre.

Planning is well underway for further prevention and recovery care services at Deer Park, and purpose built facilities at Preston and Broadmeadows. In addition, we have commenced development of 50 new adult beds at Maroondah Hospital, and are currently in the design development phase for a new Veterans Mental Health Facility at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

We have also increased services, including:

- 8 sub-acute places at Arion, in the Inner West Area Mental Health Service
- 18 interim beds for forensic mental health services at Thomas Embling Hospital to address the complex mental health problems of the forensic and prison populations
- 12 intensive Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Service and clinical support packages as part of the Integrated Rehabilitation and Recovery Care Service
- a clinical aged person's mental health position at the Peter James Centre (Eastern region) and the Latrobe Regional Hospital
- 28 additional child and adolescent clinical positions to meet increased demand and complexity, with priority given to growth corridors and to patients with complex needs
- conduct disorder programs at Bendigo Health, Wodonga Hospital, the Austin Hospital, and the Royal Children's Hospital – these support primary school aged children with disruptive behaviour problems and emerging conduct disorders, and
- expanded crisis assessment and treatment support to Western Hospital, and commenced the Homelessness Outreach Psychiatric Service at The Alfred Hospital / Sacred Heart, St Vincent's Hospital, and Werribee Mercy Hospital, to boost services for people with a "dual diagnosis" (mental health and drug and alcohol issues).

Prevention and Recovery Care

Sarah* was in her early 20s when she first experienced psychosis, after becoming increasingly socially isolated and emotionally withdrawn during her teens.

During her stay in an acute psychiatric unit, Sarah was introduced to a worker from the *Youth Early Psychosis (YEP)* program, and was connected with a Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) facility that came to play a key role in her recovery.

"Sarah was extremely shy and uncommunicative during her first visit here" said Clare*, her key support worker at the PARC. "She only lasted an hour with us on her first visit, but was staying the whole day within a week."

"Initially, our focus was on building a relationship and trust so Sarah would be able to work with us to improve her living skills and confidence to return home."

And that's exactly what happened. After being discharged from the acute unit, Sarah spent around two and a half weeks at the PARC, rapidly gaining confidence and becoming more self-reliant.

Sarah says that when she first arrived at the PARC, she couldn't cope with the idea of leaving the hospital and returning to the wider world.

"I was really very worried about having to leave the inpatient unit. I could not even think about what I needed to do to get my life together - the thought of it was just overwhelming," Sarah said.

"But the staff at the PARC treated me like a real person. They listened to my fears and did not judge me for some of the things I was thinking. I felt safe, which was so important."

PARC services provide an integrated service response to people like Sarah that combines clinical care - which monitored Sarah's medication and her mental state while assessing any risks associated with Sarah returning home - with on site psycho-social support services.

The support staff complement the clinical care provided by the Area Mental Health Service by working with young people to improve their ability and confidence to return home and live their lives, while managing their illness.

They emphasise the importance of improving daily living skills, staying connected with social activities and community life - and in Sarah's case, this broad focus was just what she needed.

"I know that if I had been sent straight home from the acute unit I wouldn't have been able to cope," she said.

"The support I got from Clare and the other staff at the PARC helped me to understand and manage my illness better as well as what I could do to reduce the risks of having another episode. I even have some firm plans for the future now."

* Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

This is an achievement under initiative 11.1, Adopt a stronger focus on early intervention and prevention, A Fairer Victoria 2005 and 2006.

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