

Media Release

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LIVED EXPERIENCE TO SHAPE VICTORIA'S MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

The Victorian Government is investing right across the state to create a mental health workforce shaped by people with lived experience to help rebuild Victoria's broken mental health system.

Engaging people with lived experience of mental illness is at the heart of Victoria's mental health reform, after the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System highlighted the importance of shared understanding and experience in supporting the recovery of others – and using personal insight to deliver better initiatives.

In a response to the Royal Commission's recommendation to expand the mental health lived experience workforce, the Victorian Government is investing over \$4 million across the sector for programs that support and develop both existing and new workers to deliver better outcomes for all Victorians seeking mental health support.

To help recruit new positions and provide professional development for lived experience workers, 19 specialist mental health services in metropolitan and regional Victoria will share in \$2.01 million, while Mental Health Victoria will receive \$360,000 to manage grants that help develop lived experience workforce leadership.

Victorian peak bodies, Tandem and the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council, will each receive \$121,000 annually over the next two years to employ a lived experience workforce lead – a key liaison role between the Department of Health and the lived experience workforce on policy and reform developments.

Self-Help Addiction Resource Centre will receive \$400,000 to lead the first phase development of a training package, ensuring lived experience workers have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in their roles.

A new peer cadet program will also receive more than \$1 million to promote career pathways for lived experience workforces in community mental health services, helping cadets studying a Certificate IV in Peer Work gain valuable experience and mentoring in the sector.

To ensure Victorians have the mental health support they deserve, the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* has invested a record \$3.8 billion to build a new mental health and wellbeing system from the ground up.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"Listening to the feedback of people with lived experience – and then acting on those recommendations – is critical in achieving better experiences and outcomes for Victorians with mental illness."

"A highly skilled mental health workforce with their own experience in the system means better treatment, care and support for all Victorians – and as we rebuild our mental health system, we're expanding this workforce."