

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers



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## NEW DEAL FOR STAFF AS MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS BEGIN

The Victorian Government has reached an in-principle agreement to deliver fairer pay and conditions for public sector mental health workers, who will be vital to Victoria's unprecedented mental health system reform.

The new enterprise agreement addresses recruitment and retention gaps identified by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, provides greater equality for nurses specialising in mental health care, and delivers a range of initiatives to promote gender equity among the workforce.

As an added boost to our mental health workforce, the agreement will also ensure a further 800 full time equivalent jobs will be added over the next four years to deliver better care for Victorians who need it, as well as up to \$3 million for extra staffing in Secure Extended Care Units and Aged services.

Under the new deal, mental health nurses will receive a two per cent wage increase each year for the first three years, in line with Government wages policy – plus a 1.5 per cent rise in year four.

Victoria's hardworking mental health nurses will also receive additional amounts to ensure that they are paid at parity with their general nurse counterparts' wages, helping attract and retain nurses in the mental health sector.

For all other employees in the sector, there will be an additional increase and retention payments to help with staff retention in line with the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The new agreement will see new positions added to address leadership and ongoing education and professional development and assist with staff retention – with a designated Mental Health Director of Nursing for each mental health service, Clinical Educators for Parent and Infant Units and extra clinical staff in High Dependency Units.

Other key outcomes will help promote gender equity, like an additional four weeks parental leave for the primary carer and one week for the non-primary carer, superannuation paid on all forms of parental leave and access to compassionate leave for those who lose a pregnancy under 20 weeks' gestation.

The agreement also develops a career structure for the state's emerging Lived Experience Workforce – helping to attract and retain people with real life experience of the mental health system, and make sure they are embedded in the future direction of mental health service delivery.

Work to rebuild Victoria's mental health system is well underway, with a record \$3.8 billion in the *Victorian Budget 2021/22* to begin the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

*"Our mental health system is nothing without the passionate, dedicated people who work on the frontline to support Victorians every day – and we're so proud to have secured a new deal with fair pay and conditions."*

*"As we begin the task of rebuilding our state's mental health services, the first step is making sure we have an agile, well-supported workforce to adapt to these changes and deliver better care than ever before."*