

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Acting Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



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BUILDING THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The Andrews Labor Government has released a blueprint to build and support Victoria's mental health workforce, with extra funding to immediately deliver more than 350 jobs to make sure the once-in-a-generation mental health reforms are matched with a workforce to deliver the specialist care Victorians need, close to home.

The new *Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Strategy 2021-2024* will guide the Labor Government's work to grow the mental health system's most important asset: a workforce that delivers world-class care, with clinicians who feel rewarded and supported in their vital work.

The Strategy was a key recommendation of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* and includes initiatives to deliver four key priorities: increasing workforce supply; improving workforce skills, knowledge and capabilities; supporting the safety, wellbeing and retention of the workforce; and supporting better system planning and sustainability.

The Strategy is being delivered alongside an immediate investment of \$41 million, which will support an extra 358 full-time equivalent positions across the mental health system, allocated to boost the workforce at existing services as well as staffing new services across the state delivered as part of the system's reform.

This investment builds on the \$228 million the Labor Government has already invested in the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* and *2021/22*, supporting 580 new mental health positions for nurses, and allied health roles and jobs for those with lived experience of the mental health system.

The Royal Commission also recommended an increase of 60 allied health graduate positions, providing a pipeline of skilled workers into the future.

The Labor Government is delivering above and beyond this recommendation, with an extra 132 graduate occupational therapists, social workers and psychology registrars to begin work in January 2022 at health services right across the state – 30 per cent of which will be located in regional Victoria.

This investment will also support 18 new allied health clinical educator roles, ensuring graduates are supported to develop and grow as they begin their careers in mental health.

While the Strategy steps out a pathway for Victoria, it acknowledges that professional organisations and other levels of government – including the Commonwealth, also need to invest to deliver real, lasting change.

The Labor Government will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth to help Victoria deliver a pipeline of local tertiary education and training opportunities – and strengthened skilled and student migration pathways – that will support a strong, sustainable mental health workforce for many years to come.

The release of the Strategy is supported by a new statewide campaign to attract more mental health workers to the growing Victorian system, with vacancies at all levels across the sector to provide good jobs for hundreds of Victorians.

Quotes attributable to Acting Premier and Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"While we build the mental health facilities our state needs, we're investing in our most precious asset: the workers who care for Victorians around the clock. This plan means more than 350 workers to help those who need it right now, and a pipeline of thousands more in the coming years."

"There's never been a better time to consider a career in mental health – we're growing our system in every corner of the state, and we need hundreds of Victorians to join the sector at every level."

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