

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Foley MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Equality  
Minister for Creative Industries



**DELIVERING  
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Wednesday, 23 January 2019

## **SAFEWARDS PROGRAM TO KEEP BENDIGO ED STAFF SAFE**

An internationally-acclaimed mental health program aimed at making staff and patients safer in hospitals will be rolled out at Bendigo Hospital.

Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley today launched Safewards Victoria, a cutting-edge pilot set for Bendigo Health and Peninsula Health.

The program teaches staff how they can reduce conflicts and the need for restrictive intervention such as medications, sedations and restraints by recognising the triggers which can put patients and staff at risk, and dealing with them before they escalate.

As part of the pilot, Bendigo Health staff may offer sensory equipment such as weighted toys and blankets to calm people, using quiet spaces or providing exercise equipment.

The program has been a key feature of clinical mental health facilities for many years but has never been rolled out at a hospital emergency department.

The Safewards model originated in the United Kingdom and was rolled out at all mental health services in Victoria in 2016 after a successful trial.

Evaluation by the Centre for Psychiatric Nursing at the University of Melbourne showed Safewards led to a 36 per cent reduction in seclusion events.

The Bendigo Health emergency department trial will run for one year before being evaluated independently by the University of Melbourne. If successful, it may be rolled out at hospitals across the state.

The Labor Government is holding a Mental Health Royal Commission – the first of its kind in Australia – and has committed to implementing every one of its recommendations.

The final Terms of Reference and Commissioners will be announced within the first 100 days of this term, before the Royal Commission commences in March.

The Safewards pilot begins on February 5.

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley**

*“We’ve introduced significant improvements to keep our hard-working doctors, nurses and other health and mental health professionals safe – and now we’re going further.”*

*“Safewards is shown to help improve safety for staff and patients in clinical mental health settings, and will be a great addition to Bendigo Health’s emergency department.”*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards**

*“Our hard-working doctors and nurses do an amazing job keeping us all safe. They should never accept an unsafe working environment as just being part of the job.”*

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