

Metropolitan Partnerships and Victoria's Mental Health System

Thematic Summary

Metropolitan Partnerships - Background

The six Metropolitan Partnerships were established in 2017 to provide independent annual advice to the Victorian Government centred around priorities outcomes for suburban communities that improve access to jobs, services and infrastructure.

At the halfway mark of their term, the Metropolitan Partnerships have made significant headway in bringing the voices of the six metropolitan regions of Melbourne into the Victorian Government's decision-making process.

As representatives of business and community sectors, many Metropolitan Partnership members work directly on the front line of service delivery, as leaders of primary health networks (PHNs), disability service providers, strategic leadership teams in major hospitals, community health services and advocacy and representation of Aboriginal Victorians. These members bring the experiences and insights from these organisations and networks to the community engagement events and the advice development process, ensuring that conversations and ideas are informed and practical.

Key Findings – Metropolitan Partnership advice regarding mental health

Over the last two years of community engagement and advice development process the following observations related to Victoria's Mental Health System have been identified by the Metropolitan Partnerships:

The need for more timely planning and delivery of services to new suburbs

Melbourne's population is growing rapidly. This level of growth is creating unprecedented challenges for infrastructure and service delivery across our suburbs, especially in outer suburban growth areas where the provision of new infrastructure and services often lags behind population settlement. New modes and methods of planning and delivery of infrastructure and services need to be considered, including the planning and delivery of mental health services as a component of our health and community services systems.

The Metropolitan Partnerships have identified that the timely delivery of infrastructure and services to new communities is vitally important to support positive community outcomes. They have heard that currently there is limited physical, service and community infrastructure in some of the growth area suburbs and there is no immediate sense of well timed, place-based forward planning that responds to and integrates the needs of different users. In planning for services and mental health responses for residents, it is important to take a proactive, approach to investing in the services and physical infrastructure to a schedule that is well-matched to population growth. Service development needs to occur in a manner that allows for the on-going flexibility necessary to provide timely and smart responses to any changes or fluctuations in predicted population growth. Equity of service access in the Northern, Western and Southern regions comparative to established suburbs will be an ongoing challenge – but one that should not be ignored. There is a tremendous opportunity in planning for and designing mental health services in our new suburbs just as governments would plan for other fundamental infrastructure and services in new suburbs.

A Place-based approach to address service gaps in established suburbs

Melbourne's established suburbs are not immune from the pressures of rapid population growth and subsequent challenges in the provision of and access to mental health services. In established suburbs, the densification of suburban population is resulting in pressure on existing systems and services. Additionally, as established suburbs change, so do the complex health and psychosocial problems of residents.

The Metropolitan Partnerships strongly support taking a place-based approach to addressing service gaps and pressures in established suburbs. Local co-design needs to be a feature of planning and evaluation with the aim of leveraging specific opportunities and addressing challenges and building local capacity and leadership. This would help to reduce barriers by building integrated services systems that are more flexible and responsive to an individual's and family's needs and have an outreach capacity to engage vulnerable and socially isolated individuals and families. To be viable and comprehensive enough, place-based or local responses will need to be complemented by in-reach specialist services in addition to referrals outside the local suburb and for some services (acute and sub-acute) outside the region. Each of these responses need to be linked to offer a continuum of timely support and treatment that incorporates early intervention, primary as well as acute and rehabilitative interventions.

Feedback from a collaborative workshop between DHHS, local governments and mental health service providers in the Northern metro region identified the need to take a systems approach to planning for and growing mental health responses for residents and avoid fragmentation. A systems approach needs to employ the 'natural' locations that residents may use for work, learning, recreation, support and services.

Accessibility of mental health services for different cohorts

As metropolitan Melbourne is shaped by the needs of a rapidly growing and changing population, it needs to become more agile in removing barriers to accessing these critical services. To enable greater access by those in need, the system itself needs to be easily navigated to facilitate a greater and more effective access to services.

The Metropolitan Partnerships held a Youth Forum in May 2018 to ensure that the views of young people are considered in the formulation of the Partnership's annual advice to government. Over 120 young people (15-19 years of age) from schools and organisations across Melbourne came together to discuss their experience of living, studying and working in Melbourne. Mental health for young people emerged as a strong theme throughout the discussions and activities for each of Melbourne's six regions. This supports other data and research that mental health is a key national issue for young people with 31% of respondents in Mission Australia Youth Survey 2018 identified as one of the top 3 personal issues.

A strong message from young people at the Forum was the need to help young people understand, access and navigate mental health services as a way to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Supporting young people to make their own informed decisions was also an important component in this and highlights that improvements in the way services and support are advertised to young people could be improved. To align with how and when they like to access information and resources about their health. Young people also recognised there is a spectrum to mental illness and that indicators of poor mental health can start in the form of anxiety and stress.

At the Metropolitan Partnerships' Youth Forum in 2018, we heard from young people aged 15-19 that mental health is their second highest priority.

The Inner Metropolitan Partnership has used seed funding to develop a youth mental health project which aims to understand the challenges of young people in accessing mental health services in the region. A co-design approach will be used to involve young people in the design of the project. This will provide a strong foundation to explore the possible tools which can enhance youth awareness and access to services.

The Metropolitan Partnerships' other community engagement has also demonstrated that other cohorts are experiencing difficulties in accessing the mental health system, especially those with multiple complex needs such as chronic physical health, alcohol and drug use, housing, financial counselling, disability support and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) services. These accessibility challenges must be fully understood in order to design a system that can eliminate the barriers commonly experienced by particular cohorts.

Designing services that are integrated, user-centred and navigable

Dynamic and sustainable service planning is the foundation of good service provision. The difficulties of a model that divides funding through Commonwealth, State, and local jurisdictions has facilitated a siloed approach to service provision which reduces the ability to effectively and efficiently integrate services. For example, while the Commonwealth Government directly funds youth mental health via Primary Health Networks, the State Government funds some adult services as they relate to Alcohol and Other Drugs and family violence – with general adult services, such as GP referrals, again funded by the Commonwealth. In addition, broad-based funding is received by community sector providers to provide mental health outreach and services which further complicates the integration of services.

However, there are examples of successful partnership models across jurisdictions designing a more integrated response to meet community needs. The Whittlesea Community Futures (WCF) project demonstrates the success of voluntary, bottom-up service planning and how this might be used as a model for service planning in growth areas across Victoria. The WCF is a voluntary alliance of organisations including the City of Whittlesea, State and Federal Government Departments and Human Service Organisations, working together with shared commitments and goals for the benefit of the City of Whittlesea's communities. Through a coordinated approach, the Strategy was able to isolate four target areas: family, positive aging, multicultural, and youth. These were then integrated into a precinct approach to human service delivery, providing both the Local and State Government with a clear framework and approach for service planning.

The Metropolitan Partnerships have broadly expressed support through their 2017 and 2018 advice to the Victorian Government for user-centred approaches and integrated health services, linking contributing social determinants of health including affordable housing and economic status to serve community members with complex needs. Currently the health system is not integrated in a way that puts the consumer at the centre and there is no single point of entry for people into and through the system of care.

Embedding mental health services in schools

Many of the Metropolitan Partnerships advocated for mental health services for young people in schools in the lead up to the Victorian Government's announcement of a new policy to provide mental health services in schools in 2018. The Metropolitan Partnerships have expressed strong interest in working with Victorian Government on the design and delivery of the Mental Health in Schools initiative to ensure they respond to local opportunities and needs. The Metropolitan Partnerships have heard that it is critical to integrate prevention with response effort from the outset, and to ensure resources are available for both aspects to support emotional wellbeing and resilience of young people in their local context. GP's, schools and other providers or local champions need to be supported in their roles as 'first points of contact' for young people experiencing mental health issues.

Cultural appropriateness of health services and systems

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

The Metropolitan Partnerships support Aboriginal self-determination of Aboriginal communities. When considering people and their mental health needs it is important to understand and respond to the diversity within the population paying respect to importance of self-determination for Aboriginal young people and families. Improving the capacity of the workforce and health service providers to provide culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people was a priority initiative of the Northern Partnership as the Northern metro region has the highest population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Melbourne.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Melbourne's metropolitan regions are geographically and demographically diverse with wonderfully culturally diverse communities. It is necessary to take a nuanced approach to consider age, life state, gender, sexual identity and orientation, culture migration/refugee experience and family context. To plan for and to ensure continuum of mental health response from early intervention through to acute care for our diverse communities it is necessary to create service locations and access pathways that are well-matched to the lives of difference age and culture groups and to design a system of support that that includes local responses that link and reflect more specialist responses that are accessible to different cohorts.

The link between secure housing and mental health

Several Partnerships have highlighted the need for more secure housing and support for people experiencing, or at risk or, homelessness. The link between homelessness and mental illness is well established. The provision of more/better affordable and social housing has been recommended. The Inner Metro Partnership has identified that a "Housing First" model should be developed to provide housing and improved mental health outcomes for people who are rough sleeping. This approach prescribes safe and permanent housing as the first priority for people experiencing homelessness. Once housing is secured, a multidisciplinary team of support workers can address complex needs through services like drug and alcohol counselling or mental health treatment.

The following table outlines the projects that the six Metropolitan Partnership are currently delivering as part of seed funding. That are investigating issues relevant to Victoria's Mental Health System.

2018/2019 mental health related Metropolitan Partnerships Development Fund projects
Inner Metropolitan Partnership
<p>Youth Mental Health Project</p> <p>This project aims to understand the challenges of young people in accessing mental health services in the Inner Metro Region. This project will also explore the possible tools which can enhance the youth awareness and access to the services.</p>
Inner South-east Metropolitan Partnership
<p>Research and asset mapping project</p> <p>This project will develop a profile of the regional prevalence and impact of social isolation and loneliness and create an asset map of current services and initiatives to better understand the experience of this issue in the Inner South-east.</p>
Eastern Metropolitan Partnership
<p>Improving integrated care and services in the outer east.</p> <p>This project responds to community feedback about the lack of integration amongst health and community services. This project aims to investigate who, in a place-based setting, is experiencing disjointed care as well as the impact of that service fragmentation. Youth mental health is a targeted cohort for this project.</p>

The following table outlines the 2017 and 2018 advice of the six Metropolitan Partnership in terms of the priority initiatives relevant to Victoria's Mental Health System.

Eastern Metropolitan Partnership	
1.2.1	Scoping study to identify areas of greatest need and a range of options for integrating health and social services and assisting users navigate the health and human services system.
1.3.6	Develop a regional roadmap to address social isolation in partnership with local governments and department of health.
1.4.1	Funding Model and Pilot project - Develop a funding and partnership model for increasing the supply of affordable housing in the region
1.4.2	Funding Model and Pilot project - Implement a pilot project within the Eastern Metropolitan Region to trial the funding model as a mechanism for driving the development of affordable housing
1.4.4	Unused Land identification - Identification of privately-owned adjacent lots that could be purchased concurrently for affordable housing development.
1.4.5	Research - Update the "Minimum Supply of Social Housing, Eastern Metropolitan Region 2014-2036" research and expand to also quantify any shortfall in affordable housing for moderate income households and for inclusive/ disability housing
1.1.3	Innovative Health and Social Service delivery model pilot – preparatory work for the development of a trial in the outer eastern region
Inner South-east Metropolitan Partnership	
3.3.1	Explore options to secure affordable housing prior to rezoning of redevelopment and strategic sites, e.g., East Village, Bentleigh East, Caulfield Structure Plan
3.1.1	Develop and disseminate a detailed profile of the prevalence and impact of loneliness and isolation across the region by procuring a consultant supported by a working group of health experts and representatives.
3.1.2	Develop a comprehensive asset map of current services and initiatives addressing loneliness and isolation across the region. Disseminate information about existing services to the community and to potential referring agencies
3.1.3	Design a comprehensive approach to addressing loneliness and isolation through community co-design including representatives from key stakeholder groups
Inner Metropolitan Partnership	
2.1.1	Establish 500 Homes governance structure, develop program logic and fund agency/ies. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding of services and a coordinator across the three Inner Metro LGAs • Expansion of the Rough Sleeps Initiative to all three Inner Metro LGAs • A pool of funding to secure head leased (and support service) properties as part of housing offered for 500.
2.1.2	Support measures to prevent people from becoming homeless in suburbs and regions, or early and location interventions when people/families become homeless.
2.1.3	Establish an expert advisory committee including three local governments to develop advice for Vic government on implementation of inclusionary zoning (and/or other developer contributions) for the Inner Metro Region.
2.1.4	Provide 50 beds in each Inner Metro Region LGA as an immediate solution to rough sleeping and homelessness via the "Common Ground/Housing First" model. This would comprise 50 Common Ground units and 50 affordable units for each development.
2.2.1	Fund a targeted, multidisciplinary, integrated strategy to engage with Aboriginal parents to intervene early to ensure all Aboriginal infants and preschool children in the Inner Metro Region have equal access to high standards of health, early years child care and education, family support and specialist services.
2.2.2	Promote systemic reform and the inclusion of Aboriginal children in early childhood education in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support early years' service providers, including kindergartens, to review their current approach to Aboriginal inclusion, using a cultural inclusion toolkit. • Pilot delivery of cultural understanding and safety training to early years' service

	<p>providers (kindergarten and MCH services).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target engagement with Koorie community to promote participation in kindergarten (using Koorie Kids Shine in Kindergarten campaign) and MCH services. • Establish advisory committee to provide advice on Aboriginal inclusion – representation from Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, Koorie parents, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, DET, Local Government and kindergarten services.
2.1.1	Collaborative project to deliver a pipeline of “housing first” affordable developments, such as Common Ground or other “housing first” developments in the Inner Metro Region, on land identified by each LGA (Yarra, Melbourne, Port Phillip). Each LGA may contribute land and capital to the project.
2.1.4	Collaborative project to conduct a workshop with young people to identify ways to improve access to mental health services for young people in the Inner Metro Region. The workshop will be co-designed with young people.
Northern Metropolitan Partnership	
4.5.1	Development of a Health and Wellbeing Hub in Craigieburn.
4.5.2	<p>MENTAL HEALTH FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE OUTER NORTH</p> <p>Part 1: A scoping study to investigate gaps in youth mental health services in the outer north. (Federal and state funded services from early intervention to secondary & tertiary)</p> <p>Part 2: Implementation plan and delivery where critical gaps exist.</p>
4.5.3	<p>CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE</p> <p>Part 1: Develop a strategy to provide culturally appropriate health services for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Part 2: Delivery of training/capacity building activities.</p>
4.3.1	Develop a whole-of-government approach to youth and young adult mental health for the region by ensuring all work across state programs and policies aligns.
4.3.3	Commence delivery of the Mernda Integrated Community, Health and Wellbeing Hub.
4.3.4	Collaborative project to research and develop a framework for community resilience indicators in growth areas to identify issues and barriers to community resilience in Northern growth suburbs.
Southern Metropolitan Partnership	
5.1.1	Pilot an Inclusionary Zoning Housing Model on two identified sites in Frankston. Build in strong policy direction and an evaluation model that will allow for roll out of other Pilot sites across the region.
5.1.2	Undertake scoping exercise of potential Youth Foyer sites in the Southern region co-located with TAFEs.
5.1.1	Conduct scoping exercise whilst the evaluation of the current youth accommodation approach nears completion. Sites to be explored could include Chisholm, Frankston, Mornington and Peninsula
5.1.2	Provide a regional funding increase for the Housing Establishment Fund (HEF) to build capacity of assistance to an average of \$500 per client/family and address increased rental pressures
5.3.2	Support a Mental Health in Schools Program to assist young people, teachers and parents to continually identify better and earlier intervention and support. The proposed demonstration site for this project is Casey South area
Western Metropolitan Partnership	
6.3.1	<p>Leverage off the new Joan Kirner Hospital by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing an improved model of community health services targeted specifically at the early years and developing a Business Case for a Centre of Excellence for Parenting (building on the Tweddle model).
6.3.1	Planning for a new hospital that will service the Western Growth Corridor
6.3.2	<p>Increase participation in early learning education for newly arrived migrants from refugee backgrounds and socially disadvantaged families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the supply of early childhood education places in Brimbank and Wyndham • Embedding cultural inclusion in early childhood programs • Providing support to parents
6.3.3	Implement two Youth Foyers in the West to support youth who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with housing, training, health and other social services.

6.3.4	Availability of adequate mental health services across the entire western region.
6.3.5	Support the accommodation needs of young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness with housing, training, health and other social services (for example, foyers for at risk youth).
6.4.1	Establish a multi-channel Western Youth Engagement Platform to inform the development of a Youth Inclusion Plan aimed at keeping young people engaged in school and the community.
6.4.2	Undertake a Strategic Spatial Assessment of key locations for creative industries, followed by development of an Implementation Action Plan to support and maintain these industries at identified locations.
6.4.3	Deliver an Education Support Program through local schools for newly arrived migrant children and youth from refugee backgrounds, via increased English language support and cultural awareness training.
6.4.4	Undertake a Gap Analysis regarding participation in sport and deliver an Active Living Census to determine regional priorities.