

Foreword

We are pleased to provide the foreword to this wonderful resource, which will assist practitioners as they plan, implement and evaluate mental health promotion programs across Victoria.

Mental health disorders constitute 10 per cent of the global burden of disease. One in five Australians will experience a mental disorder at some stage in their lifetime. As the human, social and economic consequences of mental health disorders and illness are great, there is also a growing realisation of the serious limitations of focusing solely on treatment and rehabilitation. Our challenge is to identify ways of promoting mental health and wellbeing and preventing problems before they occur.

As mental health promotion is an emerging discipline, the continued development of evidence to enhance policy and practice, across diverse sectors, is fundamental. Whilst historically, health improvements have been attributed only to treatments and medical services, there is now indisputable recognition that some of the major determinants of our mental health and wellbeing lie within the social and economic domains of our lives, and include social inclusion, having a valued social position, physical and psychological security, opportunity for self determination and control over one's life and access to meaningful employment, education, income and housing.

Addressing these determinants to improve mental health requires that many organisations from diverse sectors within the community recognise how they can and do contribute to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. It also requires a broadening of our collective understanding about the range of evaluation methodologies required to measure change in mental health and wellbeing across sectors. It is furthermore about providing resources and building the skills of practitioners in how best to monitor and measure interventions in mental health promotion. All of these actions will contribute to a more robust evidence base, which in turn, will assist with policy development and moving the research into practice.

The timing of this resource coincides with the government's renewed focus on a determinants approach to health. The recently released social policy statement, *A Fairer Victoria, creating opportunity and addressing disadvantage*, strengthens the current *Growing Victoria Together – a vision for Victoria to 2010 and beyond* policy platform and signals to the field that initiatives targeting mental health promotion are examples of good social policy. The recent Victorian Government budget announcements of \$124.8 million over four years for expansion of mental health programs signals that the new policy framework will focus on good mental health and wellbeing for years to come.

VicHealth's *Mental Health Promotion Plan 2005–2007* provides a framework for mental health and wellbeing and is intended to serve as an information resource for practitioners from diverse sectors who are seeking to maximise opportunities to promote mental health and wellbeing through their research, policies and programs. This prioritisation on the determinants of health recognises the changing environment in which we live and reflects the fact that mental health is everybody's business and that all sectors, including the health sector, have a role to play in addressing those factors that enhance or obstruct mental health and wellbeing.

Practitioners are constantly being confronted with more complex issues, which require sophisticated and multidimensional solutions. We hope that this resource contributes to the solutions and we welcome your feedback and suggestions. We wish you good mental health as you read it.



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