

What is the Mental Health Act?

The *Mental Health Act 1986* (the Act) is the key piece of legislation governing the treatment and care of the seriously mentally ill in Victoria. It is important that legislation keeps pace with advances in treatment and care, the rights of the mentally ill to participate fully in community life in the same way as any other citizens, and continuing policy development and service reform.

Why review the Act?

The Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Lisa Neville MP, announced a review of the Act on 8 May 2008. It is the first comprehensive review in over 20 years. The review will aim to ensure that the Act focuses on consumers, carers, recovery and wellbeing. The review will also aim to modernise the Act in accordance with other health regime reforms, such as disability, recently undertaken in Victoria.

Victoria is currently developing a new *Mental Health Strategy* which emphasises a flexible, consumer-orientated approach with an increased focus on prevention, early intervention, and recovery. Legislation plays a key part in reflecting and facilitating these objectives.

How will the Victorian community be involved in reviewing the Act?

The Minister for Mental Health appointed Mr Ben Bodna, AM, Ms Dominique Saunders and Mr Wayne Schwass to the independent Community Consultation Panel (the Panel) to lead **public consultations** on the review. The Panel will be supported by the legislation review team within the Mental Health and Drugs Division of the Department of Human Services.

The Minister has also established an independent Expert Advisory Group consisting of stakeholders and key experts. The Expert Advisory Group is chaired by Mr Julian Gardner, the previous Victorian Public Advocate. The Panel and legislation review team will be assisted and advised by the Expert Advisory Group.

The work with the Expert Advisory Group in preparing the consultation paper for the Review of the Act is well underway. The **consultation paper** will be released in December 2008 inviting submissions and/or attendance at a number of public forums.

The **public consultation** on the review of the Act will be led by the Panel from December 2008 with a number of public forums being conducted in February 2009 in the eight regions in Victoria. Public comments and submissions on the consultation paper will inform the development of a final report and recommendations paper. It is anticipated that legislative amendments arising from the review process will be considered by Parliament in 2010.

Details of the terms of reference for the review including the role of the independent Expert Advisory Group and the Community Consultation Panel can be found at the review web page (details below).

Have your say!

A **consultation paper** will be released in December 2008 inviting **submissions** and/or attendance at a number of **public forums in February 2009**.

The consultation paper will be available for **downloading** from the review web page. Written submissions will be treated as public documents and placed on the web page unless clearly identified as confidential.

Contact us

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