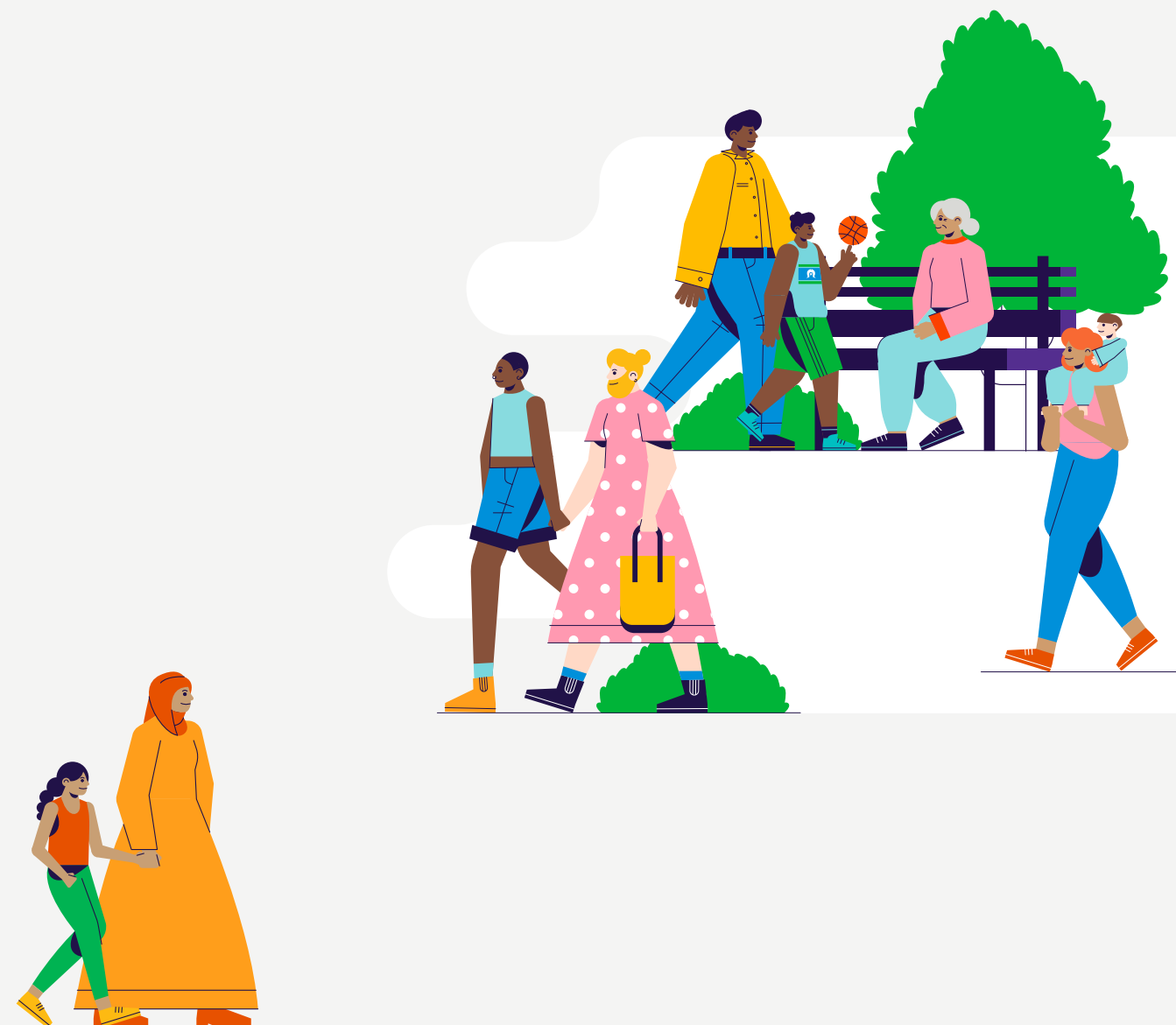




First Blueprint for Action 2025 – 2028

**Diverse
Communities
Mental Health
and Wellbeing
Framework
2025 - 2035**





To receive this document in another format, email [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team](mailto:diversity.equity.inclusion@health.vic.gov.au) <mhwd.diversity@health.vic.gov.au>.

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' or 'Koori/Koorie' is retained when part of the title of a report, program or quotation.

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Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

We proudly acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, learn, work and play. We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders and leaders, past and present. We recognise the ongoing enrichment Aboriginal people, culture and communities bring to the cultural landscape of this state.

We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded and we honour the resilience, strength and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, who continue to enrich the cultural and social fabric of Victoria. Since time immemorial, Aboriginal people have practised their lores, customs and languages, nurturing Country through spiritual, cultural and material connections to land, water and resources. These connections are central to Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing.

We acknowledge the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation, including the dispossession of land and culture and the systemic injustices that have caused intergenerational trauma and continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We recognise the critical importance of self-determination as a human right and commit to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance self-determined approaches in building stronger, healthier and more inclusive communities.

We hope that the blueprint will facilitate action to better understand and address the experiences and priorities of diverse communities, including First Peoples. More broadly, we hope that it will promote healing and encourage all Victorians to learn more about the deep wisdom and social and emotional wellbeing that is held in the world's oldest continuing culture.

We know we get better outcomes when Aboriginal people are making the decisions that affect First Nations communities. Victoria's Treaty process gives us a pathway to give First Peoples a say on the policies that impact First Peoples' lives. We commit to working proactively to support this work in line with the aspirations of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people living in Victoria.

We look forward to a time where, through the Treaty process, we have recognised the wrongs of the past, made peace, and can walk together with greater respect, understanding and connection, and fully celebrate the strength, resilience and diversity of First Nations people living in Victoria.



Recognition of lived and living experience

The department also acknowledges the generous contribution made by members of multicultural, LGBTIQ+ and disability communities, whose voices and perspectives have often been ignored or dismissed within the mental health and wellbeing system – and in society more broadly.

Your courage, resilience and ability to articulate your highly personal mental health and wellbeing journeys has been crucial to the development of this strategy and will inspire positive change.

In recognising your contribution, we commit to upholding the principles of authenticity and collaboration so that your lived and living experiences are at the heart of the blueprint.

Background



Victoria is a diverse and vibrant state. We are a population of First Nations people and migrants and a rich range of cultures, identities, languages, faiths, attributes, characteristics, ages, genders, sexualities and experiences. Every one of us has the right to experience good mental health and wellbeing and live free from avoidable and unfair differences in health and wellbeing (also known as ‘health equity’).

The Victorian Government has developed the *Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing 10-year Framework* (the framework) to deliver an equitable mental health and wellbeing system for all Victorians. We have heard that some groups of people have difficulty accessing appropriate support are not treated fairly or feel unsafe within our mental health and wellbeing system – and this leads to poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

We have focused on three communities that have told us they are significantly affected by issues of fairness, access and safety – multicultural, LGBTIQ+ and disability communities. Together, these three are referred to as ‘diverse communities’ in this document.

Input from community members and organisations helped us and the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System (Royal Commission) to identify problems in the current system. The framework outlines how we will address those problems and create an equitable system. It has a 10-year focus across six areas of change, with a strong vision for the future, based on what communities told us.

As outlined in the framework, this blueprint is the first in a series of implementation plans. It maps out what we will do and how we will measure our progress for the coming three years. Engagement and partnership with diverse communities will continue, ensuring that diverse communities can shape and contribute to action and can provide insights and feedback

about their experiences of mental health and wellbeing services.

Key milestones in mental health and wellbeing reform and changes in policy environments over the next ten years will enable updates to the framework and blueprint, as will community feedback and evidence gathered from evaluations and the latest research. We will undertake a formal review of the framework halfway through implementation of the 10-year vision.

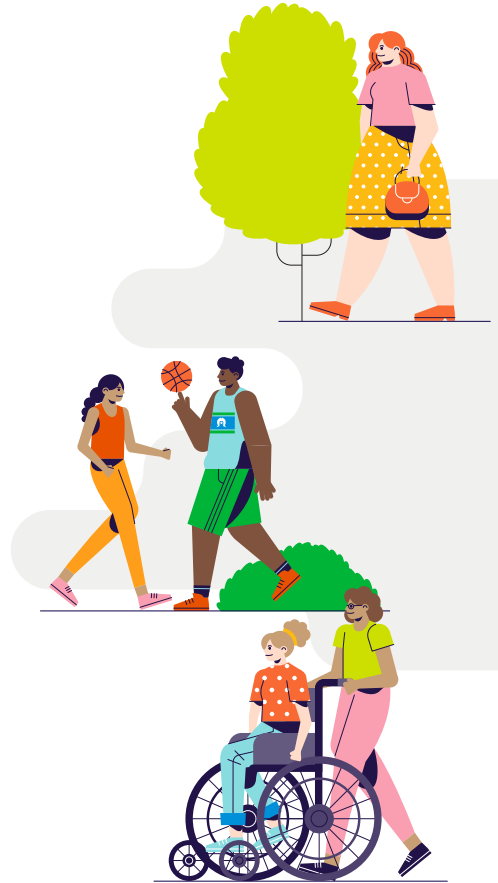
Following delivery of the framework, the expectation is the Victorian mental health and wellbeing system will be universally accessible and inclusive for all Victorians, while also having built workforce capability, strengthened governance and accountability arrangements.

Governance

A cross-government working group will oversee and guide the implementation of the framework through this blueprint. The Group will also provide advice, consultation and engagement for other mental health and wellbeing reforms.

The Group will seek advice, actively consult and collaborate with key stakeholders from diverse communities including peak agencies and community organisations; technical advisors from the diversity, equity and inclusion fields; and lived and living experience advisors.

The function and scope of this group will be complementary to the functions and scope of other formal advisory and governance mechanisms being established during the same timeframe. Specific efforts will be made to deliver diverse representation as well as engagement with diverse communities across all these governance and advisory processes.



Monitoring our progress

The Victorian Government will be accountable to communities and will report regularly, in line with the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Performance Framework, so that Victorians can see our progress in achieving the framework's vision.

We will also work with mental health services and our funded partners to support them in making changes and being accountable to communities. We will listen to diverse communities when we assess the success of our work and the work of services and funded partners.

Measuring the impact of the framework – and holding all actors in the system accountable – is important to achieving change. This will commence in 2025-26 with the establishment of a baseline measures which progress will be monitored against.



First Blueprint for Action 2025 – 2028

The following actions will progress the first implementation phase of the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework: Set Foundations 2025 - 2028.



Focus Area 1:

Diverse communities experience safe, inclusive, accessible and responsive treatment, care and support– where, when and how people need it

Objectives:

- Ensure diverse communities have access to both universal and community-specific mental health services, enabling individuals to receive the care that fits their identities and needs, resulting in satisfaction with both the access and quality of services.
- Strengthen and support community-specific mental health services, led by individuals with lived experience, so that diverse communities feel safe, respected and understood when accessing care and treatment.
- Foster collaboration between universal and community-specific services to create a system that is inclusive and accessible, ensuring that all community members feel confident and supported in engaging with the appropriate mental health care.
- Support the ongoing development of community-specific services by incorporating community feedback, ensuring these services are culturally competent and tailored to the unique needs of diverse individuals, contributing to a sense of safety and respect in their care experience.

No.	Action	Lead
1.1	Strengthen the focus on the needs of diverse communities in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals Service Framework through planned updates, identification of priority actions (such as workforce) and engagement with diverse communities.	Department of Health
1.2	Identify and act on opportunities to improve accessibility for and elevate the voices of people with disability in the mental health and wellbeing system, including by utilising insights and connections from the Disability Liaison Officer Program.	Department of Health
1.3	Elevate the voices of LGBTIQ+ communities to inform mental health reforms, including through advisory groups such as the LGBTIQ+ Taskforce and LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing Working Group.	Department of Health
1.4	Support the implementation of the Multicultural Health Action Plan 2023-27 by strengthening community engagement, capacity building and lived experience representation of multicultural communities in the mental health and wellbeing system. This includes through facilitating the CALD Health Advisory Group.	Department of Health

No.	Action	Lead
1.5	Continue to support Victorian Transcultural Mental Health in delivering culturally responsive capability building activities for the mental health and wellbeing system in Victoria, ensuring that all service providers are equipped to effectively engage with and support the diverse needs of communities across the state.	Department of Health
1.6	Deliver three-year program to increase mental health literacy and practitioner wellbeing within the Victorian Auslan and interpreter workforce.	Department of Health
1.7	Deliver actions from the Pride in Our Future strategy by amplifying LGBTIQ+ voices to government to inform ongoing improvements in the mental health and wellbeing system and supporting the delivery of LGBTIQ+ specialised services in the mental health and wellbeing system.	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Department of Health
1.8	Strengthen the engagement of Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect Centres with diverse communities by partnering with community led organisations to develop culturally tailored support groups and services.	Department of Health
1.9	Strengthen the consideration of diverse communities in mental health and wellbeing reform within community-based care delivered by Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services - Level 5.	Department of Health
1.10	Explore options to strengthen delivery of specialist services for people experiencing co-occurring cognitive disability and mental health illness.	Department of Health
1.11	Improve women's mental health in diverse communities by actively engaging and partnering with diverse communities services, sector and peak agencies to deliver on funded women's health initiatives.	Department of Health
1.12	Deliver the VCC MHW Translational Research Strategy 2024-2027 which ensures that translational research priorities will consider supporting and amplifying culturally responsive, intersectional approaches to care for diverse communities.	Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing
1.13	Consider diverse communities in the design of safe spaces services through validating the design approach with relevant diverse communities' advisory groups and/or communities of practice and engaging their members in design activities.	Department of Health

Focus Area 2:

Diverse communities are supported to actively improve the mental health and wellbeing of their own communities

Objectives:

- Ensure community-specific mental health services and supports can deliver accessible and quality services which diverse communities are satisfied with.
- Recognise and enhance the role of both informal and formal community-led support, empowering diverse communities to access and benefit from these supports to improve their mental health and wellbeing.
- Empower community-led organisations to actively support the mental health and wellbeing of their members, ensuring that individuals feel equipped and supported to care for their own communities, as emphasised by the Royal Commission.
- Focus on strengthening both community-specific mental health services and community-led supports so that diverse communities can easily access the tailored care and resources they need for their wellbeing.

No.	Action	Lead
2.1	Deliver, evaluate and share learnings from the Diverse Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHW) Grants Program to support community organisations in delivering initiatives that improve the mental health and wellbeing of diverse communities.	Department of Health
2.2	Explore opportunities to embed programs and inclusive models developed through the Diverse Communities MHW Grants Program into mental health services, including the Victorian deaf and hard of hearing mental health service model.	Department of Health
2.3	Continue to deliver the Healthy Equal Youth (HEY) program and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ youth.	Department of Health
2.4	Continue to deliver and evaluate Switchboard's Rainbow Door service.	Department of Health
2.5	Support the delivery and evaluation of mental health and alcohol and other drug initiatives under the Victorian African Communities Action Plan.	Department of Premier and Cabinet

Focus Area 3:

Diverse communities live free from stigma and discrimination

Objectives:

- Address stigma and discrimination related to mental illness and diverse communities, resulting in an improved understanding and reduced stigma around mental health in the broader community.
- Recognise the impact of both internal and external stigma, fostering an environment where individuals feel more comfortable discussing mental health and wellbeing openly within their communities.
- Tackle systemic discrimination at multiple levels, ensuring individuals feel safer and experience less discrimination in mental health services, as well as in schools, workplaces and public spaces.

No.	Action	Lead
3.1	Work with cross-government partners to promote anti-discrimination and social inclusion strategies that are intersectional, innovative, proactive and needs based. As part of this process, share emerging evidence and program outcomes across teams.	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Department of Premier and Cabinet
3.2	Build internal workforce capability to embed intersectionality across planning and implementation of new and existing initiatives in the mental health and wellbeing system.	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Department of Health

Focus Area 4:

Diverse communities benefit from targeted actions to promote good mental health and wellbeing

Objectives:

- Leverage the new Victorian Wellbeing Strategy to ensure diverse communities benefit from targeted actions aimed at promoting good mental health and wellbeing, leading to their basic needs being met and enabling a focus on other aspects of their wellbeing.
- Address the social determinants of health such as housing, employment, education and social connections, so that diverse Victorians feel connected to their community, culture and environment and are better equipped to navigate life's challenges.
- Recognise the greater exposure of diverse communities to risk factors for poor mental health and ensure that environments are created where diverse Victorians feel safe, respected and supported in thriving.
- Highlight the role of all sectors, beyond health services, in fostering wellbeing where diverse Victorians live, learn, work, and play, promoting a sense of worth, belonging and connection to something larger than themselves.

No.	Action	Lead
4.1	Continue to support community-led efforts that strengthen social inclusion and connection, with a focus on ensuring equity in membership and delivery.	Department of Health
4.2	Build the capability of multiple workforces and communities to undertake mental health promotion, including meaningful engagement of people from a diverse range of knowledges, experiences and communities who are commonly excluded from engagement.	Department of Health
4.3	Promote culturally appropriate gambling prevention and support services such as the Gambler's Help Multicultural Program within the mental health and wellbeing system	Department of Health
4.4	Support the review of the Gambler's Help service delivery guidelines to improve integration and efficiency of gambling prevention across the mental health and wellbeing system through an equity and intersectional lens.	Department of Health

Focus Area 5:

Diverse communities benefit from targeted actions that prevent and respond to suicide

Objectives:

- Ensure the Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy addresses the specific needs of diverse communities, enabling people to access the right support at the right time and navigate service systems effectively, experiencing continuous care.
- Acknowledge additional risk factors for suicide in diverse communities, such as economic insecurity and discrimination, so that services can match the diversity of needs and support individuals effectively during key transitions.
- Promote protective factors like cultural identity, community support and strong social relationships to encourage help-seeking behaviours and ensure workforces are equipped to deliver high-quality, culturally responsive care.
- Align suicide prevention efforts with the lived experiences of diverse communities, ensuring strategies are culturally appropriate, enabling communities to discuss suicide safely and have systems in place for effective prevention and response.

No.	Action	Lead
5.1	Support LGBTIQ+ communities to access tailored prevention and postvention programs.	Department of Health
5.2	Review and address the findings and recommendations of the Coronial Inquest into the Cluster of Trans and Gender Diverse Suicides.	Department of Health Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
5.3	Continue to strengthen connections and alignment between the government, relevant sectors and communities to promote mental health and wellbeing and prevent suicide in the international student population gaps in research and data related to international students.	Department of Health
5.4	Co-design, implement and evaluate a new aftercare service for the LGBTIQ+ community.	Department of Health
5.5	Continue work between the Coroners Court of Victoria, Switchboard Victoria and the Commissioner for LGBTIQ+ Communities to improve data collection on LGBTIQ+ suicides.	Department of Health Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
5.6	Continue to support the mental health, wellbeing and social connectedness of LGBTIQ+ youth (up to 25 years) in Ballarat and Geelong, with outreach to the Surf Coast, through QHub's 2 new co-designed safe spaces.	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Focus Area 6:

Diverse communities lead and see themselves in the mental health and wellbeing system at all levels

Objectives:

- Ensure the mental health workforce, from frontline staff to leadership, reflects the diversity of the communities they serve, providing equitable opportunities for individuals to find, stay in and excel at roles at all levels of the mental health and wellbeing system.
- Increase the representation of people with lived experiences of mental illness in the design and implementation of mental health services, ensuring they are welcomed, valued, and included in workplace and leadership contexts across the system.
- Foster shared power and decision-making between government and communities to create more equitable systems that actively engage and value diverse voices, ensuring communities have equitable opportunities to participate in the planning, implementation and management of the reformed mental health and wellbeing system.
- Embed diverse leadership and governance structures that tailor services to the unique needs of diverse communities, ensuring individuals have equitable opportunities to find, stay in and excel at all levels of the workforce and leadership roles.

No.	Action	Lead
6.1	Increase diverse communities' representation in lived and living experience leadership roles across the mental health and wellbeing system by fostering pathways and removing systemic barriers.	Department of Health
6.2	Establish mechanisms for connection and collaboration between diverse lived and living experience communities and leaders to ensure more equitable and inclusive mental health service reform and enhanced representation of diversity across the lived and living experience sector.	Department of Health
6.3	Expand and enhance existing lived and living experience workforce and leadership development initiatives to increase diversity across disciplines and sector.	Department of Health
6.4	Commence collection of diversity and inclusion data in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Graduate and Early Career Program to monitor and improve diversity.	Department of Health
6.5	Promote the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals Graduate and Early Career Program to people from diverse communities to enhance mental health and wellbeing workforce diversity.	Department of Health

No.	Action	Lead
6.6	Implement tailored initiatives which support the wellbeing and professional development of mental health workforce members from diverse communities.	Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing
6.7	Further strengthen efforts to meet workplace diversity and inclusion targets and work towards achieving best practice in future and share learnings with other departments across the Victorian Public Service.	Department of Health
6.8	Collect diversity and inclusion related data and information annually to monitor and support improvement to our workforce diversity, and support our goal for the workforce to be more reflective of the Victorian community.	Department of Health