

AMA September newsletter – Department of Health updates

Mental Health and Wellbeing update

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals are a free service for people aged 26 and over and do not require a Medicare Card. They provide treatment, care and support for your mental health and wellbeing close to home.

They work in partnership with primary and secondary mental health providers, with GPs identifying and referring individuals for diagnosis, care planning or medication review.

GPs can participate in shared care arrangements with Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals to deliver coordinated, person-centred support, including specialist treatment and wellbeing, peer and care coordination services.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals support people with mental illness and co-occurring needs such as substance and alcohol use, social disadvantage including isolation.

They provide mental health and wellbeing support where cost is a barrier, including for individuals who have exhausted Medicare-funded mental health care plans.

AMA has advocated for Department of Health to develop a stakeholder pack for GP's to support increased understanding of Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals. Department of Health has agreed to do this.

There are currently 15 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals operating across 17 locations, expanding to 24 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals by the end of 2025.

For the list of locations, updates or more information visit:

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-wellbeing-locals> and <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-services/mental-health-and-wellbeing-locals>

Implementation of the Health Services Plan

On 1 July, 2025, Victoria's 12 Local Health Service Networks were officially established. The Networks were a key recommendation from the [Health Services Plan](#), and group health services within a geographical region and to support collaborative care for their community, as close to home as possible.

Networks are developing implementation plans for common initiatives that all LHSN will deliver as well as local initiatives that are specific to the needs of each LHSN. These are aligned with the four initial priority areas: access, equity and patient flow; workforce; safety and quality; and shared services. Networks will also develop three-year strategies, outlining the vision for the Network, aligned with the objectives of the Health Services Plan.

Another key recommendation from the Health Services Plan was the development of a Victorian Role Delineation Framework, which was published on 29 July. It defines the roles and responsibilities of different types of health service site to promote collaboration and transparency across the system. It is available here: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-services-plan-reform/role-delineation-framework>.

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Assignment of site roles under the Role Delineation Framework will occur as part of Network-level clinical service planning, which is now underway. Clinical Service Plans will take a systems approach to future service delivery within each Network, so that the care needs of communities can be met as close to home as possible. A Critical Care Capability Framework is also being developed to support the Role Delineation Framework, with a draft of this Framework to be released for sector consultation in the near future.

Finally, the results of the workforce and community Local Health Service Networks surveys have now been released. More than 2,800 community members and healthcare workers shared their experiences of healthcare to help inform how care will be delivered within Networks. A summary of the statewide survey findings is available on the Engage Victoria website at: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/your-health-experience>.

GROSS Initiative

The Department of Health is engaging with public health services to establish consistent learning outcomes for four priority education modules – hand hygiene, cybersecurity, occupational violence and aggression and occupational health and safety.

Once the learning outcomes are finalised, the Department will liaise with health services and Local Health Service Networks to align training content accordingly. The outcomes will be released by the end of 2025 and the Department will continue working with health services on how best to support recognition of prior learning.

This work will help to reduce duplication of effort for workers and support longer term progress towards statewide standardisation of training across the sector.

Occupational violence and aggression

Weapons pose a serious risk to the health and safety of everyone within a health service, and it is essential that Victorian health services and their staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to weapons management.

As employers, health services are responsible for eliminating or reducing occupational health and safety risks to their employees as far as is reasonably practicable. Public health services are therefore responsible for ensuring they have appropriate measures in place to keep their staff safe.

The Department of Health and Safer Care Victoria provide a range of resources to help health services manage occupational violence and aggression risks.

This includes Weapons management in Victorian health services: principles and guidelines, published in 2019 and available on the Department of Health's website, which assists health services to develop appropriate policies and procedures for the management of weapons in healthcare settings. It provides practical guidance on health services' obligations, prevention measures, operational matters, documentation and reporting, cooperation with police, and key elements to be included in health services' policies. It is underpinned by four key principles:

- *Principle 1: The healthcare setting is safe for staff, patients and visitors.*
- *Principle 2: Health services and their staff act in accordance with the law in relation to the detection and management of weapons.*
- *Principle 3: Health services build cooperative relationships with local police to facilitate appropriate information sharing about, and management of, weapons.*

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- *Principle 4: Individual health services have policies and procedures relating to the management of weapons.*

Health services are expected to implement the department's broader guidance on occupational violence and aggression. This includes the Framework for preventing and managing occupational violence and aggression and the Guide for security arrangements to prevent and manage occupational violence and aggression, and are responsible for ensuring their staff, including security personnel, are trained in accordance with the Guide for violence and aggression training in Victorian health services.

Medical workforce wellbeing

The findings of the AMA Victoria's recent Doctors' Mental Health Survey, as well as the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF) National Doctors' Survey 2025, reflect themes raised during consultation sessions the Department of Health undertook for the Victorian Health Workforce Strategy.

Improving employee experience is a key pillar of this Strategy, which highlights the importance of building better workplaces and experiences for Victorian healthcare workers. Domains under the Strategy include safety and wellbeing, as well as career development and agility.

Victorian public health services are expected to have systems and processes in place to reduce occupational health and safety risks, including bullying, harassment and other psychosocial hazards. This will become increasingly important with the Victorian Government's introduction of new psychological health regulations later this year.

The Department of Health's website provides guidance on building a positive workplace culture, and resources to promote a consistent approach to the prevention and management of inappropriate behaviour. This includes the 2019 Framework for promoting a positive workplace culture: preventing bullying, harassment and discrimination, a guide to implementing the framework, and minimum standards for workplace culture training.

Andrew Wilson, the Chief Medical Officer in Safer Care Victoria, leads the Victorian Medical Workforce Taskforce which has a primary focus to develop and promote sustainable models of care and safe working hour practices for medical staff. The Taskforce is committed to critically evaluating existing strategies and embracing innovative and diverse approaches, while maintaining alignment with the overarching workforce strategy.