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COALITION RE-IGNITING MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

A Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Government will re-ignite mental health reform and build an integrated system to ensure people living with a mental illness can access the care, services and support they need.

The Coalition has highlighted the need for reform of the fragmented and inaccessible system created by the Labor Government and announced a series of initiatives to build on the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition mental health policy.

Three measures have been developed to assist further reform and integration of the mental health system:

- A Mental Illness Research Fund to drive improvements in evidence-based practice for integrated treatment of Victorians with a mental illness, with an investment of \$10 million.
- Central co-ordination of inpatient mental health beds to ensure access to a bed is available when needed, rather than patients languishing in the emergency department.
- *Pathways to Participation* – an integrated education and employment program with the objective of increasing the workforce participation rate of Victorians living with a mental illness, from the current 29 per cent to 50 per cent by 2020.

The Coalition has a strong tradition of reform in mental health care. During the 1990's the Victorian Coalition invested and reformed this area further than any other state. We also instigated significant reform by investing in and refocusing on the importance of community care.

Victoria set the benchmark for treatment and support of people living with a mental illness, and decommissioning public psychiatric facilities.

However, under the Labor Government reform in the system has stagnated and investment has dried up. Eight years on and Victoria now has a complex system that fails to link clients to the services they need.

The 2006 Boston Consulting Group report, commissioned by the state

Policy

government, revealed Victoria's *mental health care and support system is so fragmented and complex that even a knowledgeable, healthy consumer would find it difficult to navigate.*

In real terms this means more than 50 per cent of people living with a mental illness cannot get access to appropriate treatment and care. 33 per cent of patients wait for more than eight hours in emergency departments to be admitted.

And unfortunately, 30 per cent of people leaving care are not linked into services in the community.

Our approach is about creating an integrated system that detects and intervenes early, ensures people can access the care and services they need, and supports people living with a mental illness.

This is the first step in providing solutions to the current crisis in the mental health system.

Our plan is to ensure the one in five Victorians who suffer from a mental illness each year can access the services they need, when they are needed.