Back on the Agenda:
Labor’s Plan for Mental Health
LABOR’S PLAN FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Victorian Labor is committed to getting better results for people living with mental illness. We want to provide world leading, innovative care that focuses on recovery and supports the individual, their carers and the mental health workforce.

Under the Liberals, Victoria’s mental health system is in crisis. Denis Napthine and Tony Abbott’s cuts are hurting Victorian mental health patients, their families and our hard working doctors, nurses and mental health workers.

Mental health workers are saying that things have never been as bad in mental health as they are right now and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has confirmed that Victoria has the lowest recurrent expenditure per person on mental health services.

Even the Government admits failure, acknowledging in its own mental health reform paper that “Too many people who require mental health services do not receive timely or appropriate care. In some cases, people reach a point of crisis before they seek or are able to receive services.”

There has been a consistent failure to meet the eight hour target for transfer of mental health patients from emergency departments into hospital beds, there has been no increase in the number of public psychiatric beds and 250 fewer clients received PDRSS services in 2013-14.

1 Victoria’s Priorities for Mental Health Reform 2013–15
2 Source: AIHW
SETTING A NEW AGENDA IN MENTAL HEALTH

Within the first year of an Andrews Labor Government, we will develop a 10-year Mental Health Plan for Victoria. We believe a long-term vision for mental health care in Victoria is needed – one that shows a real commitment to improving mental health services and results for people. It will be developed in consultation with consumers, carers, mental health workers and service providers.

We will also develop a Mental Health Workforce Plan. The specialist staff in our mental health services play a significant role, improving the mental health and wellbeing of consumers and their carers. We want to support mental health workers and peer support workers to provide high quality care, and we want to attract and maintain a world leading mental health workforce in Victoria.

Under Labor, a *State of Victoria’s Mental Health Services Annual Report* will be tabled in Parliament. It will report on acute and community mental health services and account for treatment numbers, waiting times, readmission rates and length of stay across acute and community settings. It will also include results from consumer and carer surveys, funding levels and monitoring of the Act.

ORYGEN YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND RESEARCH CENTRE

An Andrews Labor Government will invest $60 million to completely rebuild the world’s largest international research institute for youth mental health, which is falling apart. Labor’s investment will transform the site, building a world-class facility to support the centre’s vital work and attract millions of dollars in additional research funds to Victoria.

The existing campus in Parkville has reached its limit, with the growth in staff and clients outstripping current capacity, and the state of the buildings below an acceptable standard. The redevelopment of the site will integrate over 400 researchers and clinicians and provide youth mental health services for the north and west of Melbourne.
MENTAL HEALTH COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

MHCSS
The recommissioning of the mental health community support services (MHCSS) sector (formerly PDRSS) has caused significant disruption for people with mental illness, their carers and the community mental health workforce.

The ramifications of these reforms are yet to be fully realised, but an Andrews Labor Government will immediately get to work to identify precisely what community services have been lost, and most importantly, who is missing out on care.

Labor will work closely with the MHCSS sector to rebuild their services and provide certainty and stability for their workforce and their clients following these tumultuous changes. Future funding will be informed by a full analysis of the reforms and their effects.

Support Services
Labor acknowledges the vital work of mutual support and self-help (MSSH), and carer and peer support organisations in providing services for consumers, carers and family members.

The Napthine Government undertook a review of mental health support programs but has refused to release this review, leaving the sector without policy and funding certainty beyond June 2015.

Labor will provide ongoing support for these organisations. The exact nature of this support will be informed by the current review and a full analysis of the effects of the recent MHCSS reforms.

Transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
As we move toward full implementation of the NDIS, Labor will ensure that the rollout delivers support for people with a disability and people who have mental health care needs. The NDIS will significantly increase service and workforce demand. The key to implementation is sustainable service providers and a stable, skilled and properly remunerated workforce.

Labor will advocate to the Commonwealth Government for effective funding for, and timely commencement of, the NDIS. We will scrutinise the rollout in Victoria to provide maintenance of care for those Victorians currently receiving services, and we will protect their level of care while the NDIS grows in the future. We will also develop a clear plan to support carers appropriately.
VIOLENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH SETTINGS

Violence in mental health facilities is a serious issue for many workers, who are regularly subject to threats, verbal abuse and physical assault. It has a significant effect on workers’ physical and mental health and wellbeing.

We will require mental health services and their boards to report every violent incident and make information available to the public. Labor will also audit mental health facilities to ensure that facilities have safe building design, gender sensitive areas, sensory rooms, adequate outdoor space and access to alternative therapies.

We will allocate $10 million from the Health Service Violence Prevention Fund for minor capital works to make mental health services safer. Services will be able to apply for grants specific to their needs to improve the safety of patients and staff.

Labor will develop and implement a statewide standard technique for physical restraint and include ongoing training and professional development of mental health workers. Labor will also incorporate workplace violence prevention and post-incident support strategies into the Mental Health Workforce Plan.

SPECIALIST AGED SERVICES

Labor supports the residential aged care sector and believes the State Government has a role to play in providing quality, specialist aged mental health services. That’s why Labor will stop the sell-off of aged mental health services and keep these vital residential services in public hands.
LGBTI MENTAL HEALTH

Same sex attracted and gender diverse students are vulnerable to difficulties at school as a result of harassment, bullying and stress. Labor will expand the Safe Schools Program so teacher training and resources to support students are provided at every government secondary school. Private and independent schools will be encouraged to participate. We will also support programs aimed at combating homophobia, preventing youth suicide and drug use, improving mental health and supporting parents and families of LGBTI Victorians.

FINDING THE MISSING BEDS

The Napthine Government has consistently failed to meet targets for transferring mental health patients from emergency departments into hospital beds, due to a chronic lack of mental health beds. As part of the Bed Census conducted by respected surgeon and former AMA President, Dr Doug Travis, Labor will find the missing mental health beds and provide recommendations on where capacity can be increased.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FARMER HEALTH

Farmers are consistently over-represented in the numbers of Victorians affected by mental illness, injury, chronic disease, workplace fatalities and suicide. An Andrews Labor Government will ensure that the National Centre for Farmer Health can continue improving the health and wellbeing of Victorian farmers and their families, investing $1 million a year in the Centre so it can stay open.