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Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health will save lives: Jesuit Social Services

Jesuit Social Services strongly commends the Victorian Government's commitment to establish a Royal Commission into Mental Health if re-elected next month.

"It is heartening to see the Victorian Government show such strong leadership to tackle another deeply entrenched societal issue, after already completing a groundbreaking Royal Commission into Family Violence," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

"Mental health services are critical to safe and cohesive communities, and to allow people and communities to address the complex and entrenched disadvantage they may face."

"We also know that mental health problems do not discriminate, with one in five Victorians estimated to experience a mental illness this year alone, and 621 Victorians dying by suicide last year.

"An Australian-first Royal Commission into mental health would allow the gaps and failings of the service system to be identified, and put forward recommendations that will reform the system and ultimately save lives."

Premier Daniel Andrews today announced that the Royal Commission would be established within 100 days of the election. The Terms of Reference would be announced within the same timeframe.

Ms Edwards says that improving the mental health system will also result in less crime, and fewer people in Victoria's prison system.

"Inadequate mental health services have led to increasing numbers of vulnerable people being locked up. The most recent data published by the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#) found that one in four prisoners received medication for mental health issues while in prison.

"The [Victorian Youth Parole Board](#) recently reported that more than half (53 per cent) of young people in the youth detention system presented with mental health issues and that 30 per cent had a history of self-harm or suicidal ideation.

"If we can improve outcomes for people with mental health problems, we will steer people away from anti-social behaviour and reduce the strain felt by our adult and youth justice systems."

Jesuit Social Services delivers a number of programs in the mental health space including Artful Dodgers Studios and Connexions, which work with young people, and were recently funded for a further four years, and Support After Suicide which provides counselling and other services to people bereaved by suicide.

Ms Edwards says she expects the Royal Commission to explore the importance of postvention support for people bereaved by suicide and access to suicide bereavement services for regional and rural areas.

"There are so many areas of the mental health system that demand exploration and long-term funding commitments, and we hope to see this Royal Commission achieve this."

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