Project Advisory Group

Introduction and background

New mental health legislation is a central element in the Victorian Government’s agenda for mental health reform. The Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Mary Wooldridge MP, released the document *A new Mental Health Act for Victoria - Summary of proposed reforms* on 8 October 2012 which outlines the government’s key reform objectives and policy intentions.

The legislative reforms aim to promote recovery-oriented practice, minimise the duration of compulsory treatment, safeguard the rights and dignity of people with mental illness and enhance oversight while encouraging innovation and service improvement. These reforms will result in significant improvements to Victoria’s mental health system.

The new legislation will embed supported decision making through the establishment of various mechanisms that will facilitate strong partnerships between patients, carers and practitioners. At the same time there will be greater focus on supporting public-sector clinicians and public mental health service providers to deliver high quality mental health care.

Drafting of the new legislation is currently underway.

The *Summary of proposed reforms* paper provides details of the key elements of reform and an opportunity to begin planning for implementation. The Department has established a Mental Health Act Implementation Project team to lead this work in partnership with consumers, carers, families, the mental health sector and other relevant stakeholders. The aim of the Mental Health Act Implementation Project is to effectively prepare for and achieve a coordinated and smooth transition to the new Mental Health Act.

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The government is committed to working in close partnership with people living with a mental illness, their families and carers, health services and other relevant providers to ensure the successful transition to the new Mental Health Act.

The development of new models of care in relation to the legislation will include the participation of consumers, carers and health services staff in stakeholder working groups so that change implementation is informed by the experiences and expertise of stakeholders.

The Project Advisory Group is an overarching body responsible for reviewing and providing opinion and advice in relation to proposals and other related work arising from these stakeholder working groups.
Terms of Reference

Purpose
The Mental Health Act Implementation Project Advisory Group (PAG) is a time-limited group that brings together key stakeholder representatives with expertise and experience in their relevant fields to provide advice to the Mental Health Act Implementation Project.

Scope
The scope of the PAG will be to provide comment and advice on the implementation work to facilitate the transition to a new Act. As the proposed reforms were informed by significant consultations with the general community, the mental health sector, consumers, carers and families and other stakeholders, the PAG is not intended to be a forum for revisiting the legislative framework.

Roles and responsibilities
The role of the Mental Health Act Implementation Project Advisory Group is to:

1. Attend meetings and contribute their experience and expertise to the discussion related to the implementation of new legislation.
2. Provide strategic advice on how to most effectively support the implementation of new legislation.
3. Act as a ‘sounding board’ to the Mental Health Act Implementation Project team to discuss and advance the more complex elements of the project, that are relevant to their area(s) of expertise or experience.
4. Provide a quality control mechanism to ensure that documents and resources that are developed are of high quality, ‘fit for purpose’ and useful to relevant stakeholders.

Key tasks
The members of the Project Advisory Group will:

1. Review and comment on papers circulated by the Mental Health Act Implementation Project team
2. Provide comment in relation to the implementation approach and methodology
3. Provide comment in relation to roles and responsibilities for various implementation activities and the timeframes for their delivery
4. Provide advice regarding sector expectations and related risks and opportunities that may inform the development and delivery of the plan
5. Provide comment on drafts of key documents and resources.

Meeting frequency
The Project Advisory Group will meet at specific points during the project where input and/or comments on key project deliverables are required.

Duration
The Project Advisory Group is intended as a time limited structure to provide input and advice over the life of the Mental Health Act Implementation Project. It is expected that the group will conclude shortly after the commencement of the new Mental Health Act.

Delegation
Members have been selected on the basis of their individual experience, expertise and influence within the mental health sector and as representatives of their organisation and/or professional group. For this reason, membership on the Project Advisory Group or attendance at particular meetings should not be delegated.

March 2013