



Beyond Blue submission to draft Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

10 October 2022

Recommendations

1. That the Framework:

(a) include indicators, under Domain 2, for the outcome 'mental health services are holistic and effective' that measure services across the stepped care model to ensure mental health and wellbeing services are meeting people's specific treatment needs.

(b) include an explicit focus on long-term system change and treat demographic data with care.

(c) can be adaptable to ensure consistency and alignment with outcome measures in other National and State Frameworks as they are developed and remain integrated with parallel outcomes in interrelated policy domains, such as suicide prevention.

(d) can be interpreted according to the context in which service providers and organisations are operating in, to ensure that metrics are relevant and appropriate for different programs, settings, audiences and timeframes.

2. That the sector is adequately resourced to respond to increased reporting driven by the Framework.

3. That we build the capacity and capability of the sector to implement the Framework, including ensuring effective systems and processes to support efficient data collection and analysis.

Introduction

Beyond Blue welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the draft Framework. We commend the Victorian Government for their leadership in developing measurable mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Victoria. As a key pillar of Victoria's system reform, the Framework has the potential to transform how we measure the impact that government investment has on people's lives.

The proposed domains and outcomes reflect many of the key themes that Beyond Blue has long advocated for, including:

- a mental health system that is transparent, accountable, and led by those with diverse lived experiences
- mental health services that are safe, integrated, inclusive, person-centred, and accessible to everyone
- a mental health workforce that is appropriately resourced and supported, particularly those in lived experience roles
- mental health and wellbeing outcomes embedded in non-health settings and vice versa to promote mentally healthy environments where people live, learn, work, and play and drive greater health equity, and
- measuring the community experience of the mental health and wellbeing system, in addition to measuring clinical mental health outcomes.

Response to consultation questions

(a) Is anything missing from the draft?

Beyond Blue recommends that the Framework should:

- Under Domain 2, for the outcome ‘mental health services and holistic and effective’ it is critical to develop indicators that measure services across the stepped care model to ensure mental health and wellbeing services are meeting people’s specific treatment needs. Indicators should measure the impact of low intensity early intervention services – like coaching, digital and self-guided interventions. We have strong evidence that low intensity supports provide high-quality, cost-effective interventions that reduce psychological distress and promote wellbeing, and incorporating this in the Framework would improve our understanding and measurement of the impact that investment in early intervention has on population-level mental health and wellbeing.
- Be embedded into the mental health and wellbeing system on an ongoing basis, to ensure that the Framework can monitor the impact of investment on structural drivers of mental health and wellbeing (such as investment in the social determinants) across budgetary and election cycles. While the Framework will need to be embedded into the system, it will also need to continually evolve, to ensure it remains relevant and fit-for-purpose.
- ensure that any outcomes and indicators relevant to service providers are appropriate for the intensity and duration of the program and funding. Service providers are best placed to identify short-term outcomes measures that are appropriate for the nature and intensity of the service and context within which the service is operating (informed by program theory and logic that demonstrates causal attribution to long term change). The implementation of the Framework by service providers will need to be feasible, and responsive to the service environment.
- treat demographic data with care. We recognise the need to collect demographic data in relation to the groups referred to in the Framework. However, consideration should be given, in consultation with these individuals and communities, to how data can be collected and interpreted in a way that considers the complex experiences and intersecting identities of individuals within these non-homogeneous groups.
- be integrated with outcomes from related policy areas, and in particular with suicide prevention efforts. A significant proportion of people who die by suicide experience mental ill-health, and many of the psychosocial risk factors for suicide overlap with mental health risk factors (such as homelessness, unemployment and economic instability). The Framework should embed links with suicide prevention outcomes (for example, outcomes in the upcoming Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy implementation plan and upcoming national outcomes framework being developed by the National Suicide Prevention Office) particularly for whole-of-government, population-level interventions.

(b) Is the language used inclusive and appropriate?

Beyond Blue is supportive of the language used in the domains and outcomes.

Other comments

(a) Indicators

- The efficacy of the proposed domains and outcomes will depend on the appropriateness of the corresponding indicators. We recommend the Victorian Government allows for flexibility with the selection of indicators and metrics that are most appropriate to the initiative and context. This will become increasingly important as organisations align their own outcomes data collection (informed

by program strategy and logic) with standards required by States, Territories, and the Commonwealth.

- There is a risk that lack of alignment across jurisdictions between different outcomes frameworks could lead to the use of multiple, onerous, or repetitive outcomes measures to satisfy different reporting requirements, that will add an administrative burden and reduce the return on investment for Government funding. This would also have an unintended consequence of reducing data quality and thus opportunities for learning and to evaluate impact.

(b) Alignment with national outcomes monitoring and evaluation

- As an organisation with national reach, Beyond Blue believes all Australians would benefit from a mental health system that is accountable to them through transparent outcomes and indicators. Should the Commonwealth Government or other jurisdictions develop similar frameworks, the Victorian Government should partner with other jurisdictions to reduce fragmentation and enhance our collective understanding of the impact of public expenditure on mental health and wellbeing.
- We recommend that the Framework recognises that outcomes monitoring should be complemented by appropriate investment in evaluation activities, which are critical to support learning and ongoing improvement, aid decision-making, assess impact, and support accountability. Qualitative data are critical to help make sense of outcomes metrics and to identify opportunities for improvement. The Framework would be better placed to strengthen the evidence base if it were supported by the development of State and/or National Standards for evaluation activity and investment.

(c) Resourcing

- Beyond Blue also stresses the importance of the Victorian Government:
 - adequately resourcing the sector to respond to potential increased reporting driven by the Framework
 - building the capacity and capability of the sector to implement the Framework, including ensuring effective systems and processes to support efficient data collection and analysis.