

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the 2025-26 Budget Estimates

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Portfolio: Mental Health

Hearing: 8:30am Thursday 12 June 2025

Witnesses

Ingrid Stitt MLC, Minister for Mental Health;
Jenny Atta, Secretary,
Pam Anders, Acting Deputy Secretary, Mental
Health and Wellbeing,
Naomi Bromley, Acting Deputy Secretary,
Hospitals and Health Services,
Catherine Rooney, Acting Deputy Secretary,
Finance and Support, and
Rebecca Van Wollingen, Executive Director,
Operations, Safer Care Victoria, Department of
Health; and
Priscilla Radice, Chief Executive Officer,
Victorian Health Building Authority, Victorian
Infrastructure Delivery Authority.

Legend

All questions are in **red text**.

The responses to the questions, including source details, are in **black text**.

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QUESTION: Jade BENHAM: Thank you, Chair. Minister, could you please provide a breakdown of the number of mental health beds by type and location and a total breakdown by category?

Ingrid STITT: Thank you for that question. I can give you a breakdown of the additional beds that have been delivered in direct response to the royal commission recommendations. It is over 170. We have 52 beds in Sunshine; 30 additional beds at the Northern; 22 new mental health beds at Royal Melbourne; 35 new beds as part of the specialist women's mental health service, known as Wren, the first publicly funded female-dedicated mental health beds in the state, which is terrific; and 16 beds at Barwon Health McKellar Centre. We also have a range of different Hospital in the Home beds, which are technically categorised as beds under the system. We are building, as you would know –

Jade BENHAM: Sorry, can I just go back to Hospital in the Home. How are they serviced?

Ingrid STITT: They are multidisciplinary teams that work out of the area mental health service. Not everybody is suited to a Hospital in the Home position, but they are clinical decisions that are made by the mental health and wellbeing teams within each area mental health service.

Jade BENHAM: Right. Thank you. Can we get that list and the detail and the numbers provided to the committee on notice, please, in the interests of time. Mr McGowan has got some questions.

Ingrid STITT: Okay. I have taken you through the beds that are being delivered as part of this budget and the royal commission work. Obviously, there are vastly more beds than that available right across the mental health system, the acute system.

Jade BENHAM: Are they available now?

Ingrid STITT: We can take that on notice and see what we might be able to provide.

SOURCE: Transcript – page 10

COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION: Jade Benham

HEARING DATE & TIME: 8:30am Thursday 12 June 2025

Responsible Division/Agency: MHWD

RESPONSE

Answer:

The Royal Commission's interim report recommended that 170 additional beds be provided in response to demand across the regions serviced by Western Health, Northern Health, Barwon Health and Melbourne Health (Royal Melbourne Hospital). The Allan Labor Government has delivered the following acute beds:

52 beds at the Sunshine Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre, Sunshine.

30 beds at the Northern Hospital, Epping.

22 beds at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Parkville.

16 beds at the Barwon McKellar Centre, North Geelong.

35 beds (inpatient and hospital in the home) through the Statewide Specialist Women's Mental Health Service – now named the Women's Recovery Network or Wren, in Albert Park and Shepparton.

19 hospital in the home beds through Barwon Health and Parkville Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

All of these beds are currently available, although due to operational matters the number of beds available within the system can change on a day to day basis. One of the factors that can lead to temporary bed closures is the delivery of essential capital works to address damage or improve consumer and staff safety. My department, including the Chief Psychiatrist, will continue to work closely with health services to minimise and respond to the impact of bed closures.

The number of specialist mental health beds by setting is publicly available via the *Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing annual report 2023-24*.

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Source Reference:

Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing annual report 2023-24, p.90 <

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-01/chief-officer-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing-annual-report-2023-24.pdf>>

Nick McGOWAN: Can you break down at least for us the differential between the 15 versus the seven, because obviously you know the 15 already – what proportion of that \$34.4 million relates to the 15?

Ingrid STITT: I think I can probably –

Nick McGOWAN: Secretary, perhaps.

Ingrid STITT: get that detail for you now, but if you want to go to your next question, we might be able to come back to it.

Nick McGOWAN: That would be very good, and if I run out of time, please take it on notice.

Ingrid STITT: Yes.

SOURCE: Transcript – page 11

COMMITTEE MEMBER ASKING QUESTION: Nick McGowan

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Responsible Division/Agency: MHWD

RESPONSE**Answer:**

The 2025-26 State Budget allocates \$6 million to support the existing 15 Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals and \$23 million to expand the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals network to seven additional locations.

Source Reference:

Victorian Government State Budget 2025-26 Overview, p. 26 - [https://s3.ap-southeast-](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/vicbudgetfiles2025.26budgetvic/2025-26+State+Budget++Budget+Overview.pdf)

[2.amazonaws.com/vicbudgetfiles2025.26budgetvic/2025-26+State+Budget++Budget+Overview.pdf](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/vicbudgetfiles2025.26budgetvic/2025-26+State+Budget++Budget+Overview.pdf)

Victorian Government, Media Release – Real help with the cost of living for regional Victorians - <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/real-help-cost-living-regional-victorians>

QUESTION: Jade BENHAM: Again, in the interests of time, these reports have been provided to PAEC every year, so if we can get another copy of that report, that would be fantastic. Minister, I am going to move on from there. Can you please provide an audited report on the expenditure, too, of the mental health surcharge – or the mental health tax – since it was introduced and for the coming budget year?

Ingrid STITT: Thank you. Of course the mental health levy has supported a large amount of reform, and it has increased the investment in Victoria's mental health system since it was introduced in 2022. The levy continues to be solely dedicated to mental health services spending, and that is quite –

Jade BENHAM: Sorry, Minister. The levy was brought in to solely fund the royal commission's recommendation implementation. True?

Ingrid STITT: The mental health levy was a key recommendation of the royal commission.

Jade BENHAM: To fund those recommendations.

Ingrid STITT: The recommendation was around making sure that we had a mechanism to deliver the kind of significant uplift in investment that would be required to deliver all of the reform that the royal commission called

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for. What I can indicate is that if you look at budget paper 5, page 19 you will see that the levy will collect more than \$1.1 billion in 2025–26. The levy each year is reported through the normal budget process, but the investment –

Jade BENHAM: Minister, given this is budget estimates, I am after a detailed breakdown of that spend, and again, happy to take that on notice.

Ingrid STITT: No, I do not need to take it on notice. I can answer that for you now. In addition, under the mental health Act that we introduced in 2022, the chief officer for mental health and wellbeing must submit to me an annual report which details how the proceeds have been spent on delivery of mental health and wellbeing services, and Ms Benham, that report is publicly available each year.

Jade BENHAM: Again, it is one of those things that we have been requesting year on year and again requesting a detailed breakdown of that \$1.1 billion spend each year. If we can get a copy of that, that would be great, so we can get a broad scope.

Ingrid STITT: I am happy to provide it, but it is already publicly available. It is delivered each year to me by my department, by the chief officer for mental health and wellbeing. I think what is really important here is to note that more than double our mental health investment has been possible since 2017–18 because of the introduction of the levy, and that has meant that we have been able to double the investment compared to immediately prior to the royal commission's report being tabled. This is a good thing for the level of reform that we are seeking to deliver.

Jade BENHAM: Great. Are you able to provide that report to the committee, please? We are just wanting to see where the \$6 billion –

Ingrid STITT: I am very happy to, Ms Benham, but –

SOURCE: Implementation plan for the Royal Commission into Mental Health recommendations

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RESPONSE

Answer:

Information on the funding raised from the Mental Health Service Levy between 2021-22 and 2023-24, as well as activities and deliverables to which the levy has contributed to, are publicly available via the *Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing annual report 2023-24*.

Source Reference:

Chief Officer for Mental Health and Wellbeing annual report 2023-24, p.15 <

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-01/chief-officer-for-mental-health-and-wellbeing-annual-report-2023-24.pdf>>