

Minister for Mental Health, Community Services, Women's Affairs and Disability Services and Reforms (2010 – 2014)

-Improving Services and Changing Lives-

As a Minister in the Baillieu and Napthine Governments I had responsibility for an annual \$5 billion of government funded services that provided support to some of Victoria's most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens.

As a Liberal, I am a strong believer in minimising interference in people's lives and maximising individual initiative. However, many people require government support to break out of a cycle of disadvantage, to live life to their fullest potential and to be free from violence and discrimination.

This drove my passion for the reform agenda that I led. An agenda that focused on moving people out of the endless cycle of disadvantage by comprehensively addressing issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, disability, violence in the home and child abuse and neglect.

- Launched **Services Connect**, a unique new model to transform our delivery of human services. Invested more than \$30 million for a trial at 9 sites within DHS and across 180 Community Sector services, joined up of the delivery of services across human services and health. Evaluation showed people were getting better support, were exiting the system earlier and had improved self-management of issues. *Services Connect* won the Gold Award and the Innovation Award at the Australian Awards for Excellence in Public Sector Management in 2014.
- Instigated the **Shergold Report into Reform of the Human Services Sector**, established the **Community Sector Reform Council** (co-chaired by the Secretary of the Premier's Department and the President of VCOSS) and drove reform of the Government/Community Sector partnership to improve fundamentally the way services were delivered to vulnerable Victorians.
- Established the **Children and Youth Area Partnerships**, bringing together police, schools, hospitals, human services, mental health and AOD treatment services to develop and deliver local solutions for vulnerable families.

CHILD PROTECTION

While Victoria's child protection system lurched from crisis to crisis under the previous Labor Government, the Coalition Government implemented major reforms based on recommendations from the Cummins Inquiry, which we established on coming to office.

Our **Vulnerable Children's and Families Strategy** set a 10-year roadmap to help protect children from abuse and neglect, which was supported by an additional \$1.1 billion investment across four Liberal Nationals budgets.

- Changed the law to give vulnerable children certainty of placement, which reduced the time to achieve stability and permanency for these children and reduced the adversarial nature of Children's Court proceedings.

- Significantly increased therapeutic residential care placements (from 40 to 152). Enhanced supervision in residential care and funded 100 individualised home based therapeutic care packages for children in kinship or foster care.
- Established the **Commissioner for Children and Young People** and Australia's first **Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People** for independent oversight, accountability and transparency of services for vulnerable children.
- Established **Cradle to Kinder** which works with at-risk young mums to strengthen their parenting and **Springboard** to intensively assist young people exiting care, as well as comprehensive health and education assessments for children entering residential care.
- Changed the law to make it easier for foster carers to make day-to-day decisions about children in their care.
- Invested in **150 new child protection workers** and improved retention rates for senior staff by reforming the career structure to increase their ability to continue to work with their children and families.

YOUTH JUSTICE

We invested to divert young people from crime while strengthening our youth justice supports, education and facilities.

- Made major infrastructure improvements at the two custodial centres by providing better security, safety and operations and banning smoking at all youth justice facilities.
- Introduced full-time schooling (36-40 hours per week for each young person) throughout youth justice, via **Parkville College**, a landmark education initiative about making a real difference in the lives of young offenders.
- Established an **Independent Visitor Program** to improve external oversight of youth justice facilities.
- Expanded **Youth Justice Group Counselling**, invested in **Intensive Bail Supervision** and expanded diversionary measures to keep young people out of the youth justice system.

MENTAL HEALTH

We worked to make it easier for people to access safe and local mental health support through more services, reduced bureaucracy and enhanced agency capacity.

- **Rewrote the 30-year old Mental Health Act** to put people with a mental illness and their families at the centre of decisions about their assessment, treatment and recovery and established Australia's first **Mental Health Complaints Commissioner** and the **Mental Health Tribunal** to operate in the new system.
- Invested in 450 new and replacement beds to meet demand including delivering the largest ever boost for mental health services in the west with a new 54-bed acute mental health facility in Werribee and a new PAPU at Sunshine, 70 beds at

Dandenong and new PARCs in Heidelberg, Fitzroy, Mildura and Warrnambool and Frankston.

- Reformed the way Community Mental Health services are delivered to ensure a recovery focus with individualised supports.
- Undertook the largest ever targeted investment to improve the safety of women in mental health facilities, including 63 projects to build female only wards, bathrooms and lounges and locks on doors and bathrooms.
- Initiated and funded the **HEY Project**, supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI young people.
- Built three regional Mother and Baby Units for women experiencing post-natal depression in Ballarat, Bendigo and the La Trobe Valley. Refurbished the mother-baby unit at Monash Health and delivered Victoria's first Women only PARC (Prevention and Recovery centre) in Springvale.
- Invested \$15m in Police, Ambulance Victoria and Emergency Departments to provide a coordinated response to people with complex needs suffering a mental health crisis.
- Worked with the Mental Illness Fellowship to establish **Homesafe**, which supported people with a mental illness to access and maintain private rental tenancies.
- Introduced **Safewards** to reduce the use of restrictive interventions in mental health facilities.
- Funded the introduction of Family Based Therapy at the Royal Children's Hospital for children with eating disorders and developed and funded an eating disorders strategy.
- Rolled out **Mental Health First Aid** throughout Victoria so community organisations, particularly in regional Victoria, could take the lead on identifying and addressing early stage mental illness.
- Funded 5 leading edge research initiatives, translating knowledge into practice through the \$10m **Mental Illness Research Fund**.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

We also made significant improvements to the delivery of alcohol and drug treatment, delivering **Victoria's first whole-of-government plan** to reduce the impact of excessive alcohol consumption and illicit drugs on individuals, families and our community.

- Funded and built a dedicated Mother and baby withdrawal facility in Heidelberg, established 14 specialist pharmacotherapy beds and funded additional withdrawal beds in Hume, Gippsland and Mildura.
- Established the **Family Drug Treatment Court** to help parents who have had their children removed to address their substance abuse and assist with reunification.
- Recommissioned drug and alcohol treatment services to ensure people with an addiction can get effective local support when they need it.
- Funded 27 Emergency Departments to better identify and support patients affected by ICE, alcohol and other drugs.

- Legislated to give parents greater control over who can supply alcohol to their children through “Secondary Supply” laws.
- Funded communities to tackle ICE at a local level including community forums led by Good Sports and ran the ***What are you doing on ICE?*** campaign.
- Established Pharmacotherapy Networks and significantly expanded funding for addiction medicine specialists, expanded the use of Naloxone and trained overdose witnesses in its use. Expanded needle and syringe services, including extending 2 mobile services to operate on a 24-hour basis.
- Lead alcohol culture change initiatives ***Say When, Name that Point*** and ***No Excuse Needed*** campaigns with VicHealth as well as the Cannabis education campaign ***Don't let your dreams go up in smoke***.
- Opened and subsequently restructured Bungilwarra, a 12-bed residential treatment service for young Aboriginal Victorians.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

We initiated and undertook a range of new initiatives through our **whole-of-government action plan to reduce violence against women and children**. This included additional funding of over \$200 million in 2014 alone.

- Established, with the Federal Government, **OurWatch** the national foundation to prevent violence against women and their children, secured Melbourne as the headquarters and provided seed funding for initiatives relating to violence against women in CALD communities and hospitals and respectful relationships in schools.
- Trialled and rolled out of the state-wide ***Strengthening Risk Management Project (RAMPS)*** to provide flexible support and case management for women and children who are victims of violence.
- Doubled the number of ***Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Programs*** (including a new initiative in Peninsula), establishing the ***Adolescent Family Violence Program*** and doubling the number of ***Men's Behaviour Change Programs*** and ***Adolescent Family Violence Programs***.
- Built three new Multidisciplinary Centres to co-locate Police, Child Protection and Sexual Assault Services to provide a comprehensive response for victims.

DISABILITY

One of the proudest moments during my time as a Minister was standing with our Premier, Denis Napthine, as he signed the ***National Disability Insurance Scheme*** agreement with the Commonwealth.

- Signed onto the NDIS with an initial trial site in Barwon and then a state-wide rollout, requiring significant investment and reform to fundamentally change the support for people with a disability, to a model where they have genuine choice and control.

- Proposed and secured the NDIA Headquarters for Geelong.
- Funded the closure of Oakleigh, Sandhurst and part of Colanda, Victoria's old-style disability institutions.
- Funded 7 new cutting-edge **Changing Places** accessible bathroom facilities in public places such as the MCG and the Zoo as well as a mobile unit for events and festivals.
- Introduced the **Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme** to ensure the safety of people living in disability residential services.
- Legislated to recognise the important work of Carers.
- Expanded supported accommodation places and the availability of respite.

ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

- Introduced year-round electricity concessions to make electricity bills more affordable for vulnerable Victorians.
- Legislated to allow natural parents who relinquished babies for adoption prior to 1984 to receive identifying information about their adult adopted daughters and sons, and organised and delivered an historic apology in Parliament to relinquishing mothers.
- Streamlined emergency relief payments for victims of disasters.
- Established three **Good Money Hubs** to help financially stressed families have options, other than pay-day lenders, for financial support.
- Established the **Women's Governance Scholarship**, which sent women who are Directors of non-profit organisations to the AICD Company Director's course, expanding their capacity for Directorships and expanding the non-profit sector's expertise and governance.
- Funded over 40 new and 35 refurbished Men's Sheds and expanded hours at Neighbourhood Houses.