

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



Thursday, 31 October 2024

VICTORIA'S FIRST CHIEF ADDICTION MEDICINE ADVISER APPOINTED

The Allan Labor Government has appointed Victoria's first Chief Addiction Medicine Adviser – a role which will lead work within the health system to save lives, reduce drug harms and make sure more people get the care they need.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced Dr Paul McCartney has been appointed to the new specialist role which was created as part of the Labor government's \$95 million Statewide Action Plan to reduce drug harms.

The Chief Addiction Medicine Adviser will be the Government's principal adviser on issues related to addiction, drug use and harm reduction – and will help guide the development of Victoria's first ever Alcohol and Other Drugs strategy to address drug harms over the long-term.

Dr McCartney will provide expert advice to make sure Victoria is well prepared to respond to threats such as Nitazenes – helping to reduce overdose and other harms.

Coming into the role with an extensive 25-year career as a general practitioner and a specialist in addiction medicine, Dr McCartney has worked across community, clinical and primary care settings in both metro and regional Victoria.

In addition to appointing this role, the Statewide Action Plan is also boosting access to the overdose reversal medicine Naloxone – establishing 20 vending machines to trial alongside existing needle exchanges.

As part of the plan, the Labor Government is investing \$8.4 million to boost pharmacotherapy in up to 30 locations targeting areas of high-demand or where there are service gaps.

The plan will also see the trial of a 'Never Use Alone' overdose prevention and response helpline for anonymous care and advice – reducing overdose risk and supporting emergency services to respond faster if needed.

The Labor Government has also announced an implementation trial of pill testing in Victoria – with legislation currently before Parliament, the mobile service is set to begin this summer and will attend up to 10 music festivals and events, with a fixed site to open in mid-2025.

For more information, please visit health.vic.gov.au/statewide-action-plan-to-reduce-drug-harms.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"Victorians struggling with addiction deserve the best care and chance, and under the expertise of our first ever Chief Addiction Medicine Adviser Dr Paul McCartney, we can make real progress to reduce drug harm in Victoria."

"Through our Statewide Action Plan, we are dedicated to providing Victorians with safe, effective and person-centred care that will not only save lives, but also reduce overall drug harms in the community."

Quote attributable to Chief Addiction Medicine Adviser Paul McCartney

"I look forward to working closely with the community, stakeholders and partners as we develop Victoria's long-term strategy to address alcohol and other drug harms."

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