

Co-CEOs to lead a new era for Victorian mental health sector

Two of Australia's most outstanding mental health leaders have been selected as Co-CEOs of the Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing (the Collaborative Centre), with Carolyn Gillespie and Professor Sarah Wilson appointed to the positions.

The pair bring decades of experience in the mental health sector to their roles, including a deep understanding of the lived experience of people with mental ill health and psychological distress, and their carers.

The Co-CEOs will work together to drive reform and improve collaboration, enacting key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Carolyn comes to the role with a wealth of lived experience leadership and clinical expertise across healthcare, justice and the community services sector – including as a senior executive at the LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisation Thorne Harbour Health and Board Chair of LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

Social work qualified and with almost 25 years' experience leading trauma and mental health services and driving system change, Carolyn says she is excited to continue putting lived experience at the heart of her work.

"I know from my own lived experiences that tailored mental health solutions are more effective and longer lasting, so we're going to ensure we have a human-centred and trauma-informed way of doing things," Carolyn said.

"There is definitely a mood for change – people want to see mental health done differently in Victoria and Sarah and I have a fantastic opportunity to lead that work together."

Sarah Wilson is a leading international researcher in brain and mental health, who has more than 30 years' of clinical experience in the Victorian public and private sectors, working with people who have complex mental health conditions.

She also has more than 15 years' of executive and senior leadership experience at the University of Melbourne, most recently as Pro Vice-Chancellor of Student Life.

"There is so much great work happening out there, but it needs to be done more collaboratively to bring it into the light – which is what Carolyn and I will help facilitate," Sarah said.

"We're looking at the system through a fresh lens. We want reform that leads to better care and collaboration, so there's no more patchwork service delivery or cracks in the system."

Collaborative Centre Board Chair Terry Laidler said Carolyn and Sarah are excellent leaders well placed to deliver on the next stages of the Centre's development.

"Establishing the Centre was the first recommendation in the interim report, so we're very excited to be following through and appointing two outstanding people to these positions," Terry said.

Deputy Chair, Maria Katsonis said the two new leaders would put lived experience at the heart of their work and lead significant change in the sector.

“We know how important it is for decisions to be guided by lived experience and with Carolyn and Sarah at the helm, we have Co-CEOs who will not only reform the system, but put people first while doing so,” Maria said.

The Collaborative Centre’s new Co-CEOs will begin in their roles in January. For more information about both Co-CEOs, visit the [Collaborative Centre website](#).

...ENDS