



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
VICTORIA

## **MENTAL HEALTH MONTH BREAKFAST**

**Friday 26 October 2018**

**Speech by Anthony Howard QC**

Good Morning ladies and gentlemen.

I join in all that the Governor has just said.

The Australia-wide figures concerning the scourge of mental illness are arresting and disturbing. These are but some of them -

- In any given year, 1 in 5 Australians will experience a mental health condition.
- 8 people kill themselves daily in Australia, almost 3000 annually. Last year 621 Victorians took their own lives. Suicide is the leading cause of death for those aged 15 to 44. Tragically, indigenous persons are 4 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population.
- Three million Australians are living with depression or anxiety. Life expectancy for an adult with an untreated mental illness is shortened by 20 years.
- 75% of mental health problems or symptoms occur before the age of 25, with associated self-harm, homelessness, drug addiction, violence and/or termination of educational opportunity. 1 in 7 Victorian children between the ages of 4 and 7 has a mental health issue.

When opening the Invictus Games last week, the Duke of Sussex spoke powerfully about the resilience of competitors in being open about their hidden emotional and mental wounds. He said: *The Invictus generation has shown us that in today's world being tough means being honest about how we feel, both inside and out.*

These inspiring words point to the importance of seeking assistance when needed and engaging in honest dialogue. Another fundamental is the paramount need for early intervention. Clearly, greater public and personal dialogue is necessary.

We are very fortunate to have with us today a panel of three experts who will discuss some of the causes and solutions to this pressing social issue. Each panellist has an outstanding CV, but time only permits a brief summary. They are –

**Professor Patrick McGorry AO** - Director of Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, Victoria. The 2010 Australian of the Year, Patrick is a world-leading clinician, researcher, reformer and author in the area of early intervention and youth mental health. Over many years, he has made significant contributions to health policy in Australia.

**Ms Fiona McCormack** - Chair, VicHealth Board and CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria, the peak body for family violence services for women and children in Victoria. Fiona is an internationally recognised expert in her field.

**Mr Hunter Johnson** - CEO of *The Man Cave*, a preventative mental health and emotional intelligence organisation for boys and young men. Hunter has a diverse background in youth leadership and social entrepreneurship. He is one of this year's Queen's Young Leaders and winner of the 2018 EY Social Entrepreneur of the Year award.

Our panel moderator is the renowned **Ms Sam Lane** - Walkley award-winning radio and TV personality and sports journalist for the *Age*, having covered major global sporting events over many years, including the Beijing and London Olympics. Sam is a member of Channel 7's AFL broadcast team and was previously with Channel 10's AFL panel show, *Before the Game*. Sam is also the author of *ROAR*, the story of AFLW, published by Penguin this year.

The panel will start shortly, but in the meantime, please relax and enjoy the hospitality at Government House – and join me in thanking Sam and the panellists for volunteering their time today.