

The Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health



Community Forensic Mental Health Program

This program provides community based clinical and support services to forensic patients (people who are subject to a court order by virtue of mental impairment), selected high risk clients who have a serious mental illness and significant forensic issues, sex offenders and others with problem behaviours who pose a high risk to the community. The program is a statewide service aimed at meeting the complex psychosocial and rehabilitative needs of clients. Major emphasis is placed on risk assessment and risk management, together with assertive follow up and outreach services.

Court Services

The Court Services Program provides psychiatric and/or psychological pre-sentence reports to courts as requested, and psychiatric assessment and advice on people referred by magistrates at a number of courts throughout the state. The program identifies and, where appropriate, recommends the diversion of offenders with a mental illness from the criminal justice system.

Research

A comprehensive research program is undertaken to ensure that clinical practice remains of the highest standard and that service provision is continually improved. Current research areas include risk assessment, aggressive patients, substance abuse and mental illness, people who threaten, arson, problem gambling, stalking and victims of stalking and possession of child internet pornography.

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The Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health, known as Forensicare, is a statutory agency responsible for the provision of adult forensic mental health services in Victoria. Forensic mental health is a specialist area within the mental health field. It must address the needs of mentally disordered offenders, the justice sector and the community, while providing effective assessment, treatment and management of forensic patients in appropriately secure settings.

In addition to providing specialist clinical services through an inpatient and community program, Forensicare is mandated (under the *Mental Health Act 1986*) to provide research, training and professional and community education.

Forensicare has been established to achieve -

- Improved quality of services in forensic mental health.
- Increased level of community safety.
- Better community awareness and understanding of mentally disordered offenders.
- Increased specialist skills and knowledge.
- Policy advice, service planning and research that contributes to the improved delivery of mental health services.

Council

Forensicare is governed by a ten member Council that is accountable to the Minister for Health. Members of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health Council are -

The Hon. Jim Kennan, SC (*Chair*)

The Hon. Justice Bernard Teague
(*Deputy Chair*), *Justice of the Supreme Court and nominee of Attorney-General*

Michael Burt, *CEO, Forensicare*

Professor Paul Mullen, *Clinical Director, Forensicare*

Dr Robert Adler, *child and adolescent psychiatrist*

Tony Goad, *associate director of a healthcare consultancy company*

Una Gold, *former senior manager with Department of Treasury and Finance (now retired)*

Debbie King, *partner in social policy consultancy and nominee of the Minister for Corrections*

Terry Laidler, *psychologist and communications consultant*

Judith Player, *Executive Director, Association of Relatives and Friends of the Emotionally and Mentally Ill*

Legislation

The Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health was established by a detailed amendment to the *Mental Act 1986*. The Act details the functions and requirements of both the Institute and the governing Council, and covers all services provided to both voluntary and involuntary patients and clients (S117A - S117U).

The Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health also provides services under the *Corrections Act 1986*, *Sentencing Act 1991* and *Crimes (Mental Impairment and Unfitness to be Tried) Act 1997* to prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) and offenders.

Services

Thomas Embling Hospital

The 100-bed Thomas Embling Hospital is a state-of-the-art secure forensic facility primarily for patients from the criminal justice system who are in need of psychiatric assessment and/or acute or continuing care and treatment. The hospital has six accommodation units, together with education and recreational facilities.

Prison Services

Specialist mental health care is provided to prisoners at the Melbourne Assessment Prison. This incorporates a reception assessment program, outpatient services and an after hours crisis intervention program, together with an Acute Assessment Unit - a 15-bed short stay assessment unit for male prisoners thought to be mentally ill and/or at risk. Regular consultant psychiatrist sessions are provided at the larger state-managed regional prisons and prisons accommodating special needs of prisoners. Consultant psychiatrist sessions are also provided each week at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, the largest of the two women's prisons in Victoria.

