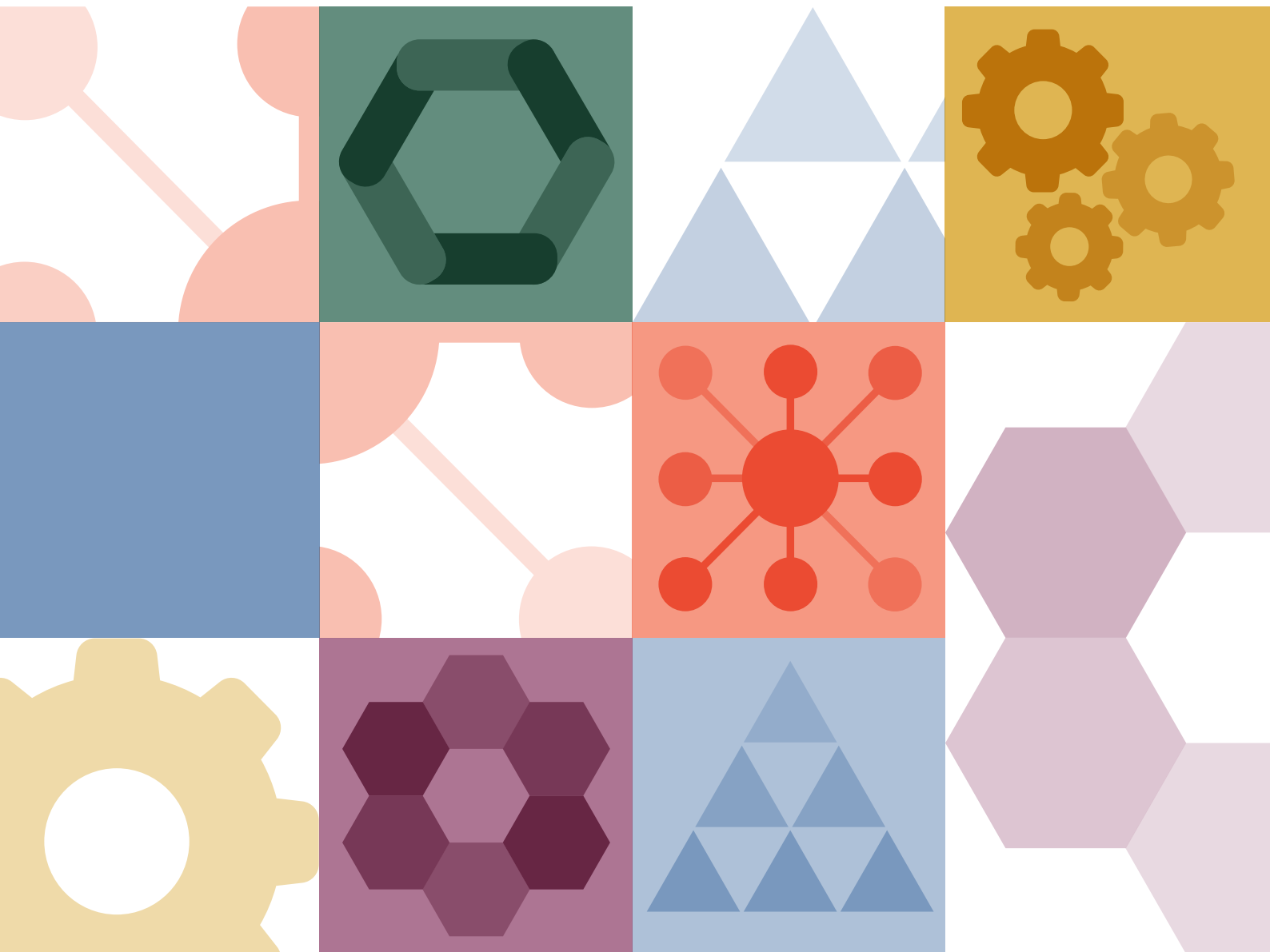




STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2026 - 2029

Shaping a brighter future
for people and communities





INTRODUCTION

In Victoria, as in other parts of the world, mental health (MH) and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services are working with increasing numbers of people who are experiencing both mental health and substance use/addictive behaviours conditions. The co-occurrence of these conditions (often referred to as 'dual diagnosis', comorbid or concurrent disorders) can add complexity to engagement, assessment, treatment and recovery. In response to this the Victorian Government have recognised the need to invest in a number of approaches and strategies to assist the MH and AOD service sectors to optimally respond to working with this consumer group (who are the rule and not the exception within both service sectors) and their families, carers and supporters.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (2021), recommended that mental health services, both clinical and community based, develop better integrated care (IC) and treatment responses for people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addictive behaviours (recommendations 35 & 36). This included an emphasis on involving their families, carers and supporters. This work is to build on the work already done by the Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative (VDDI). Nexus has been an integral part of this state-wide Victorian Dual Diagnosis Initiative over the past 20 years. This has positioned us very well to play a significant role in the evolution and development of IC for MH & AOD service system into the future.

We are a small but diverse and highly skilled team, passionate and committed to improving service delivery for people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addictive behaviours and their families, carers and supporters. We are also actively engaged at a state, national and international level promoting, being informed by and adding to the evidence base for best practice around service delivery to communities where people are impacted by mental health and substance use or addictive behaviours issues.

VISION (2026-29)



To be a leader in supporting implementation and advocacy of evidence informed integrated treatment and care, that builds knowledge, skills & confidence of the stakeholders we work with; to improve the lives of people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addiction.

This Strategic Action Plan is informed and guided by the following key policy, legislative and service sector guides as directed by the Victorian State Government:

- Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (RCVMHS) 2021 Recommendations 35 & 36.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022.
- Integrated care – The Guidance.
- Our workforce, our future (capability 6). Ten year plan (2023 - 2033).
- Mental Health Transformational Plan
Priority area 7 (P7) – Integrated treatment and care for people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addiction.

DEFINING THE PURPOSE AND ROLE OF NEXUS

Nexus is engaged in a range of workforce capacity building activities. The capacity building service strategies applied by Nexus fall under the following key headings/domains: key roles that Nexus performs are identified below:

Nexus seeks to achieve the following outcome:

Better outcomes for people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addictive behaviours, their families, carers and supporters



It intends to do this by:

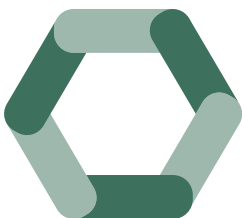


Creating a more skilled, capable and confident workforce

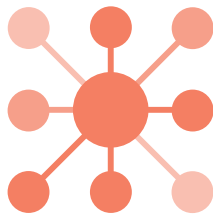


Raising the awareness and profile of the need for integrated treatment/care for co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addictive behaviours

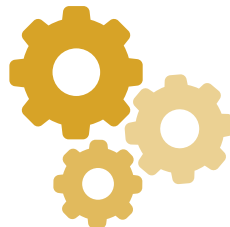
Nexus' work can be grouped into the following 5 domains:



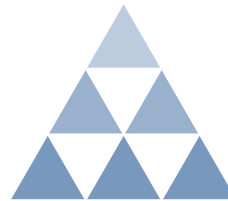
ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP



SECTOR INFORMANT



STRATEGIC THINKER & THOUGHT LEADER

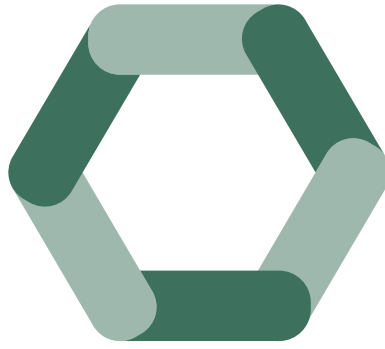


CAPACITY BUILDER



SECTOR CONNECTOR

Note: Each of the domains identified does not function in isolation but intersects and works in conjunction with one another



ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

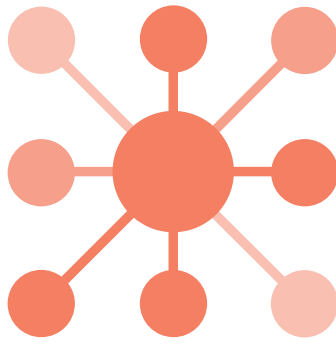
Nexus plays the role of advocate and leader by influencing and advocating at the governmental, organisational and individual levels to change practice, policies and perceptions.

Activities

Nexus' advocacy and leadership work is predominantly implicit and done through:

- Directly and proactively advocating to the Department of Health (DoH) to inform and influence their viewpoints and policy direction.
- Advocating to St Vincent's Hospital Mental Health department (STVMH), St. Vincent's Mission, St. Vincent's Foundation and other relevant services.
- Proactively identifying other areas of focus for Nexus' advocacy and leadership work.
- Workforce development and training.
- Extensive support of local networks.
- Presenting at conferences.
- Developing policy submissions.

Close interactions with frontline MH and AOD staff is a key strength of Nexus. It enables Nexus to have a detailed understanding of the challenges encountered by staff when supporting people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addictive behaviours, and their families, carers and supporters; and to articulate this in its advocacy and leadership work.



SECTOR INFORMANT

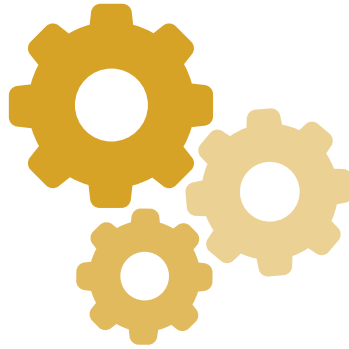
Nexus plays the role of sector informant by disseminating critical information (including information related to best practice, sector events and capacity building opportunities) to the MH and AOD sectors.

Activities

Nexus disseminates information through:

- The Nexus website.
- The training and resources it provides.
- Sharing information within the networks and groups to which it belongs.
- Seeking feedback and connection with stakeholders.
- Conferences, public forums, and other speaking engagements.
- The relationships that it has with staff members in other organisations (through formal and informal meetings).
- Developing publications, typically in collaboration with other organisations.
- Regular communication with stakeholders on Nexus' role, activities, and outcomes, including St Vincent's Hospital and the Department of Health.

Because of Nexus's long-standing history and experience in the sectors in which it works, it can also effectively direct information seekers to relevant and appropriate sources.



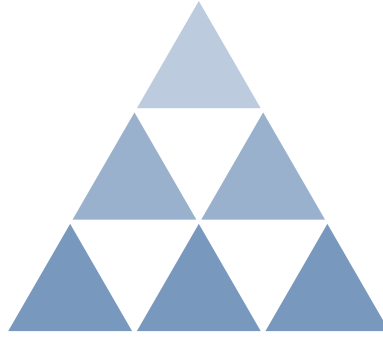
STRATEGIC THINKER & THOUGHT LEADER

Nexus plays the role of a strategic thinker and thought leader by contributing and informing what leading practice in integrated treatment and care for co-occurring mental illness and substance use/addictive behaviours looks like.

Activities

Nexus currently achieves this through:

- Strategically identifying specific areas and relationships where Nexus can proactively seek to influence and inform the direction/thinking of the broader MH and AOD sectors.
- Product development e.g. Integrated Care tools for practice.
- Undertakes and partners research to strengthen Nexus' position as a leader in co-occurring mental illness and substance use/addictive behaviours.



CAPACITY BUILDER

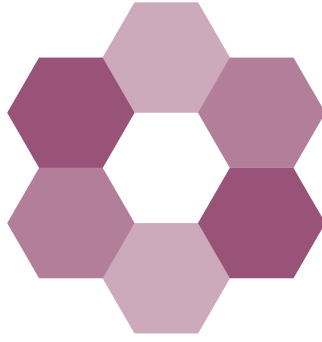
Nexus plays the role of capacity builder by improving the confidence, skills and capabilities of the MH and AOD workforce.

Activities

Nexus currently supports workforce development by:

- Supporting St. Vincent's mental health and service providers to implement Nexus Integrated Care tools and resources.
- Providing tertiary consultation services to assist in identifying gaps and opportunities to fill them.
- Creating and providing high quality education, training and implementation in a range of areas related to integrated practice.
- Facilitating reflective practice sessions.
- Influencing staff through networks that Nexus participate in.
- Providing other opportunities for professional development such as organising conferences and forums.

Nexus collaborates with international experts and Australian universities to disseminate key research, implications and resources to organisations to strengthen and build their knowledge/capacity.



SECTOR CONNECTOR

Nexus plays the role of sector connector by encouraging collaboration between services in the provision of integrated treatment and care for people living with co-occurring mental illness and substance use or addiction and the broader public health sector.

Activities

Nexus connects service providers by:

- Articulating the commonalities between service providers (and using this as a strategy to encourage them to work together).
- Facilitating connections between service providers, providing warm introductions where necessary.
- Guiding and upskilling service providers to network more effectively.
- Creating formal and informal opportunities for service providers to build connections.
- Including and supporting service connection opportunities in training.

Nexus supports and actively contributes to the sharing of ideas across multiple service providers.



NEXT STEPS

Key Targets, Activities & Stakeholders including deliverables for 2026-29

The tables on following pages do not represent the entirety of Nexus work, however it represents our priority areas of focus during 2026-29.

Targeted Agencies for 2026-29:

- St Vincent's Area Mental Health Service.
- State funded AOD and community MH agencies that operate in the St Vincent's MH catchment.
- State funded AOD and community MH agencies that provide services in Banyule, Boroondara, Nillumbik and Yarra.
- Peak bodies and state-wide organisations TANDEM, SHARC, MHVIC, VAADA, VCCMHW, etc.

Future Growth:

Engagement with tertiary sector and other peak education bodies – seek opportunities to explore how we can influence.

St Vincent's Health Australia – seek further opportunities for collaboration.



St Vincent's Hospital

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🌐 www.svhm.org.au/our-services/departments-and-services/n/nexus

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