

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council

Meeting Communique

15 June 2015

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council convened its eighth meeting in Brisbane on Monday 15 June 2015. The primary focus of the meeting was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing with consideration given to the Wharerātā Declaration as an overarching framework.

Focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander emotional and social wellbeing

The mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was the focus of the meeting. This reflected shared commitment to Action Three: Targeted responses in priority areas in the [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014—2019](#). Mr Condy Canuto, Ms Leilani Darwin and Dr Noritta Morseu-Diop were invited and discussed how their work and the five themes of the Wharerātā Declaration might be reflected in planning, policy and service delivery.

Key themes raised included:

- Persistence of racism and discrimination
- Importance of workforce development and capacity
- Cultural capability of service delivery, programs and staff
- Adverse impact of short term funding for Indigenous programs
- Funding of non-Indigenous organisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing
- Concern over the lack of timely data on suicide and attempted suicide
- Need for increased recognition of cultural expertise by mainstream services.

Ms Marianna Serghi, Executive Advisor, Indigenous Health with Queensland Health, attended to provide Council with an overview of the Department's work in developing a Queensland Indigenous mental health strategy.

Members identified several important strategies and issues for ongoing consideration

1. Community designed, led and implemented solutions
2. Recognition of a skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and ongoing development of the same

3. The need to build the cultural capacity of non-Indigenous staff and clinicians with support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and Indigenous organisations.

Other areas of work that the Commission is undertaking to support the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were also briefly discussed. These include:

- Development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotion Wellbeing Action Plan as part of the [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019](#). The focus and activities of the Action Plan will be identified in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across Queensland, government agencies and non-government organisations. It is envisaged this Action Plan will be publicly released by April 2016.
- Discussions between the Commission, [Ngoonbi Cooperative Society](#) in North Queensland and the University of Western Australia in relation to further Commission support for the two National Empowerment Project (NEP) pilot sites in Kuranda and Cherbourg.
- Engagement of Barbara Schmidt and Phillip Mills (Torres Strait Islander elder, community leader and experienced health service manager) to scope the issues surrounding the development of a 24 hour response to suicide in Townsville. This activity has been progressed in response to the Council's resolution at its April 2015 meeting.

Other issues discussed

Members identified and discussed several other important issues being progressed:

1. The National Mental Health Commission Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services being considered by the Commonwealth Department of Health.
2. Issues raised by the Commission on its Facebook page regarding the [Mental Health Bill 2015](#), including: the proposal for Patient Rights Advisers to be employed by Hospital and Health Services, involuntary treatment and examination orders and the use of ECT for involuntary patients.
3. The Queensland Department of Health's submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs inquiry into the [Social Services Legislation Amendment Bill 2015](#). Proposed changes would result in forensic patients receiving treatment in hospitals lose access to the Disability Support Pension. The Committee is due to report on 15 June 2015.
4. Discussions between the Commissioner and the Auditor-General to initiate discussions about what can be done through their office to ascertain whether or not all monies allocated to Hospital and Health Services for mental health is actually spent on that program. As a result, the Auditor General has advised that during their 2014-15 financial audit programs, that they consider mental health when looking at the management controls in place to ensure the completeness of counting and the accuracy of coding activity under the Activity Based Framework (ABF). The results of financial audits of Hospital and Health Services are scheduled for tabling in Parliament in November 2015.
5. The engagement by the Commission of the consultancy firm, Urbis, to map the extent and nature of consumer, family and carer leadership and engagement in the public, private and non-government mental health and alcohol and drug sectors. This work has commenced and is due to be completed at the end of 2015.

6. Progress of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Action Plan has included a Roundtable held on 12 May 2015 and attended by Council member Mitchell Giles and a wide range of service providers and subject matter experts. A paper, being prepared by Siggins Miller consultants, is expected to be publicly released by the Commission in mid-2015. Plans for the Commission to undertake consultations with service users (which will include families and carers) and service providers in major regional centres from July to September 2015. The Alcohol and Other Drugs Action Plan is due to be launched in November 2015.

Acknowledgements

Council acknowledged the contributions made by outgoing member Ms Ailsa Rayner and wished her well in her ongoing work to improve the way mental health services are delivered for consumers.

Council also congratulated the following Council members on their recent achievements:

- o [Professor Gracelyn Smallwood](#) for the publication of her book *Indigenist Critical Realism: Human Rights and First Australians' Wellbeing*
- o [Mr Luke Terry](#) for being awarded a scholarship to the Harvard Business School and on winning the 'Social Enterprise Champion' award at the Social Traders Social Enterprises Awards.

Next meeting

The next Council meeting is scheduled for 31 August 2015 and will focus on partnerships with other policy areas such as education and employment, and criminal justice.

For any enquiries relating to the Communique please contact the Council Secretariat: Council@qmhc.qld.gov.au