

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Meeting

2 December 2014 Brisbane, Australia

Meeting Communique

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council convened their final meeting for the year at the Queensland Museum at South Bank on Tuesday, 2 December 2014.

Discussion focused primarily on issues raised by members including the recent shootings of individuals by police, support to give up smoking after people leave hospital, and Council's approach to responding to complaints and concerns about individual service experiences brought to the attention of members.



Richmond Fellowship Community Choir

The meeting was followed by a morning tea with the Honourable Lawrence Springborg MP, Minister for Health to acknowledge the contribution of stakeholders to the work of the Council and Commission.

The Council and guests were entertained by a performance from the Richmond Fellowship Community Choir, conducted by Ms Anne Birmingham.

Recent shootings of individuals by police

Council expressed considerable concern about the six shootings of individuals by police in 2014. Four of these men died and members noted that in a number of instances mental health and substance misuse issues were reported to be involved. They also noted that media reporting of these incidents can further stigmatise people with mental illness.

The Council supported the Commissioner's engagement with the Commissioner for Police and senior officers from the Department of Health. Both agencies are commencing reviews of existing policies and programs immediately. They urged the Commissioner to seek their cooperation in establishing a more strategic and independent review that incorporated the views of a wider group of stakeholders including families and looked beyond the specific cases to the wider interaction of people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems with police.

Members also expressed their concern for the impact of these tragic events on the mental health and wellbeing of the police workforce.

Giving up smoking

The Council discussed the implications of the current ban on smoking on hospital grounds for people with mental illness and drug and alcohol problems and best way to support them.

Members acknowledged that although consumers might receive support to cease smoking in hospital, further support post discharge is essential. They recognised that a community based cessation program directly connecting people leaving hospital with local programs is likely to optimise the benefits of giving up smoking while in hospital.

Council requested the Commission to continue their discussions with Queensland Health to explore opportunities to support consumers leaving an in-patient facility to maintain their commitment to giving up smoking when leaving hospital. They stressed the importance of a focus on the overall physical health of people with mental health and drug and alcohol issues.

Council's approach for receiving complaints and concerns about individual experiences

From time to time, Council members receive complaints and concerns about individual service experiences. While Council's role is to provide advice on systemic issues, all members value the input from individuals. The Commission will review the information on its website to ensure there is a clear explanation of the complaints processes available to Queenslanders and continue to liaise with the Office of the Health Ombudsman. Members will be able to draw attention to this information and will consider whether or not there are systemic issues raised by these concerns. More detailed consideration will be given to this in the Commission's forward work agenda.

Update on the Council Committees

The Council was pleased to receive updates from the Consumer, Family and Carer and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committees. They noted the challenge of identifying and addressing those key issues within the Council's mandate that will make a difference to Queenslanders. Specific highlights included:

- The Consumer, Family and Carer Committee's projects to influence consumer, family and carer engagement in system reform with a range of initiatives on track for delivery in 2015.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee's support for the continuation of the National Empowerment Project program in both Kuranda and Cherbourg communities and for the approach by the Commissioner to meet with the Coroner to address concerns raised by the Committee about the need for greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input to coronial recommendations.

Highlights from the Commissioner's Report

- Council members look forward to on-going discussion with the Commission on the Mental Health Bill 2014 tabled in Parliament on 27 November 2014 and were pleased to hear that many of the Commission recommendations have been adopted.
- Members who attended the Tony Coggins Wheel of Wellbeing workshops on mentally healthy workplaces reaffirmed the success of the events.
- Council commended the *Issues Paper: Consumer Participation in education and training of mental health nurses* prepared by Council member Prof Brenda Happell and look forward to its public release in January 2015 and subsequent discussion.

Awareness, prevention and early intervention, including suicide prevention

Following the meeting, several members of Council met with Commission staff for a briefing on current activities being undertaken in these two important areas and to provide input to possible directions to inform the progress of the relevant Shared Commitments in the *Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Strategic Plan 2014-2019*.

Next Council Meeting

The next meeting for Council is scheduled for 16 February 2015.

Members agreed to forward the Communique to their networks and encourage them to subscribe to the Commission e-news to stay up to date on current activities by visiting www.qmhc.qld.gov.au.



The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council with the Honourable Lawrence Springborg MP, Minister for Health and Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck, Queensland Mental Health Commissioner