

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Meeting

13 February 2015 Brisbane, Australia

Meeting Communique

On 13 February 2015, the Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council convened their first meeting for the year at the Brisbane Common Ground complex South Bank.

The Council acknowledged 13 February as the **Anniversary of the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples**. The day holds deep meaning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as it recognises and acknowledges the injustices they have been subjected to since colonisation and the emotional and physical suffering experienced by the Stolen Generations that still continues to have an impact on families and communities today.

The Council meeting focused primarily on planning and a renewed approach to improve and broaden Council and Commission stakeholder engagement.

Council agreed that the focus for its meetings in 2015 will be:

- Drugs and Alcohol, particularly better outcomes for people and how this specific focus is maintained within the broader mental health agenda
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and drug and alcohol issues
- Partnerships with other policy areas such as education and employment, and criminal justice
- Promoting awareness and early intervention

Consumer, family and carer perspectives and the issues for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people will be an integral element of all discussions.

Council's and Commission's Performance

The Council considered the [Baseline Report-November 2014](#) developed by Paxton Partners as part of the evaluation of the Commission's functions.

Specific recommendations in the Baseline Report that relate to Council are the need to:

8. Increase the profile of the Council with a particular emphasis on the work undertaken to guide reform.
9. Continue to include people with lived experience, their families and carers, as appropriate in the Commission's planning and decision-making activities.
10. Consider stronger representation on the Council of the interests of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Council members will provide their advice on strategies to address the Baseline Report's recommendations.

Council Activities

Professor Gracelyn Smallwood provided an overview of the [Wharerata Declaration](#) which is an international statement that promotes a vision of “healthy Indigenous individuals, families and communities through Indigenous leadership”. It sets out to achieve excellent mental health services in Indigenous communities, culturally competent mainstream services and Indigenous leadership that influences positive change. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health leaders group supported by the Mental Health Commissions is adapting the Declaration to the Australian context. Council members were very supportive of the concepts in the Declaration and look forward to seeing it adapted to the Australian context.

Mr Etienne Roux reported enthusiastically on his role representing the Council on the Steering Group for 2015 **Mental Health week**. The aim is to ensure better support ready for local initiatives integrated into a wider program addressing mental health promotion and awareness. Open Minds will maintain its lead role with support from the Mental Health Commission and other non-government agencies.

Ms Jan Kealton recently attended the presentation hosted by the Commission from the Victorian Auditor General's Office about their [report](#) on **criminal justice and mental health**. She reflected on some of the main issues raised. Ms Kealton noted that senior government officers who attended from a number of agencies including the Queensland Police Service, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Legal Aid Queensland and the Department of Health were keen to make a difference to the lives of people with mental health problems who are caught up in the criminal justice system.

Mr Mitchell Giles reported on his involvement as a member of the project reference group overseeing the development the **Queensland Alcohol and Drug Action Plan** as part of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan*. The Action Plan will focus on demand and harm reduction with a roundtable to be held in May 2015 and a final action plan to be publicly released later in 2015.

Mr Luke Terry updated the Council on a range of initiatives that are supporting **employment outcomes** for people with mental health and drug and alcohol issues particularly on the Darling Downs and through the Toowoomba Clubhouse. Council has agreed that a strategy to promote opportunities and possibilities needs to be considered. Further information can be found at:

- [Social Procurement Australasia](#)
- [School for social entrepreneurs](#)
- [NAB Impact Investment Readiness Fund](#)
- [Social Ventures Australia](#)
- [Ability Enterprises](#)

The Council discussed the work of its two committees: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee; and the Consumer, Family and Carer Committee. Both committees were established for one year to June 2015. Now that the Council has determined its priorities for 2015, it will further consider the scope and nature of the Committees at its next meeting with a particular focus on the Commission and the Council better engaging with stakeholders across Queensland.

Update from the Commission

The Commissioner's Report to the Council highlighted a number of matters of specific interest to members. The Council was pleased to note that the [Stronger Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants Program](#) invested over \$500,000 for staff of non-government organisations to attend Wheel of Wellbeing training; to support 10 projects to enhance community awareness of mental health and wellbeing; and eight projects to enhance community wellbeing. The Council noted the range of projects funded from across Queensland including the Mental Illness Fellowship Queensland Tobacco Free project. This project will support mental health consumers, who are twice as likely as the general population to smoke daily, to cease smoking.

The Council noted that with the recent State election the **Mental Health Bill 2014** has lapsed and will need to be reintroduced in the State Parliament to proceed. They supported the concern of the Commissioner that appropriate resources are allocated to implement the Bill.

The Council looks forward to supporting the Commission as several initiatives get underway in 2015 to support the implementation of the [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2014-2019](#). Projects of particular interest include:

- Developing an **Alcohol and Drug Action Plan**. The Commission has contracted Siggins Miller to commence the Action Plan's development in consultation with key stakeholders.
- Following approaches from a number of stakeholders, the Commission is now considering what role it can take in supporting or facilitating a more coordinated approach to the implementation of the [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#) in Queensland for people with psychiatric disability. Council members expressed concern about the lack of clarity for service providers and for consumers, families and carers about NDIS implementation. Concern was also expressed regarding people who currently receive some support, but who will no longer be eligible for support under the NDIS.
- Developing a **Mental Health Awareness, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan**. Consultations to develop the Action Plan will commence with a discussion regarding school based early intervention activities and workshops and forums facilitated by Mr Gregor Henderson in the week commencing 13 April 2015. Mr Henderson is an internationally recognised expert in awareness, prevention and early intervention from the United Kingdom. Workshops will be held in Brisbane and Townsville and will focus on starting/developing well, living well, working well and aging well. These events will start the conversation on what might be done to improve awareness, prevention and early intervention of mental health difficulties.
- Developing a **Suicide Prevention Action Plan** with consultations commencing in March 2015 and a **Rural and Remote Action Plan** building on work commenced in 2014 through a series of [Ministerial Roundtables](#).

Next Council Meeting

The next meeting for Council is scheduled for 20 April 2015. Several members will also participate in teleconference with members of the Western Australia Mental Health Advisory Council on 12 March 2015.