



Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Meeting

Brisbane – 24 February 2023

Communique

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council (the Council) met in Brisbane on 24 February 2023. The Council membership was extended to include the new Ministerially appointed Chair, Professor Cindy Shannon AM and members Paul Martin and Sanam Ahmadzada. They joined Naraja Clay, Professor Jason Ferris, Edward Fewings, Jorgen Gullestrup, Professor David Kavanagh, Emma Kill, and Jane Williams whom were reappointed along with continuing members Professor Robert Bland, Professor Brett Emmerson, Gabrielle Vilic (Deputy Chair) and Sue Scheinplug as the full panel of Advisory Council members. Apologies for this meeting were received from Sue Scheinplug, Gabrielle Vilic, Edward Fewings and Jane Williams.

Meeting highlights

Government commitments to mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention

The Council were pleased to see the release of *Better Care Together: A plan for Queensland's state-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services to 2027* and *Achieving Balance: The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan 2022-2027* and the allocation of \$1.645 billion in the 2022-23 State Budget to support the implementation of *Better Care Together*, *Achieving Balance* and the recommendations from the Mental Health Select Committee report No.1., 57th Parliament – *Inquiry into the opportunities to improve mental health outcomes for Queenslanders*.

Governments' expansion of Queensland Police Drug Diversion Program

The Council were pleased to see the Government's expansion of Queensland Police Drug Diversion Program to include the minor possession of all types of drugs by diverting people from the criminal justice system to health and education services and the introducing fixed and mobile site drug checking services to reduce the risks and harms associated with illicit drug use.

New Commissioner recruitment

The Council noted the omission in the position description of encouraging people with a lived experience of mental health, suicide or alcohol or other drugs to apply and the Council recommends this be included as a highly desirable attribute and considered when assessing applicants for the Commissioner's role.



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Letter to the Minister

The Council wrote to the Minister of Health and Ambulance Services, Hon Yvette D'Ath regarding the Government investment in *Better Care Together*, the expansion of Queensland Police Drug Diversion program and the inclusion of lived experience in the requirements for the new Commissioner role.

General update

The meeting focused on a range of systemic reform priorities, including the renewal of *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018–2023* and the development of Phase two of *Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019–2029*.

The Council did not make any specific recommendations to the Commission, however discussions were held at the meetings on key issues of concern, including, but not limited to:

- People in crisis across Queensland being unable to access Opioid Replacement Therapy.
- Hospital presentations of psychosis due to people taking medicinal cannabis and relapsing.
- Implications for driving laws with some medicinal cannabis containing THC.
- The importance of the National Mental Health Commission strategy on Stigma discrimination and reduction.
- The Council requested an update from the Chief Psychiatrist on the impact of Queensland's locked wards.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be on the 15 June 2023 in Brisbane.