



Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council

Meeting Communiqué

21 October 2016

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council met in Brisbane on Friday, 21 October 2016. The meeting focused on the evaluation of the policy to lock wards in Queensland's public acute mental health wards; and the Commission's submission to *The civil litigation recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Redress and Civil Litigation Report – understanding the Queensland context* issues paper.

The Council was advised that the Council Chair, Dr Peggy Brown has resigned from the Council, effective from 26 October 2016, to take up her appointment as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Mental Health Commission. Mr Kingsley Bedwell was nominated to chair the meeting discussions.

Evaluation of the policy to lock wards in Queensland's public mental health facilities

The Acting Executive Director, Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch, Queensland Health, Associate Professor John Allan, gave a presentation to the Council on the progress being made towards evaluating the 2013 decision to lock Queensland's acute mental health wards. Professor Allan's presentation outlined the steps that are being taken to move towards discretionary locking of wards, including trialling Safewards in a number of Hospital and Health Services. Safewards is based on a multi-intervention model to reduce the number of aggressive incidents and use of seclusion.

The Council confirmed the Commissioner's position that the issue is complex and that acute mental health wards may need to be locked from time to time to ensure the safety of consumers, and that the policy context should support local decision making. The Council also noted the need to ensure that discretionary locking policies are based on clear and objective criteria to acknowledge the power differential which exists between consumers and clinicians.

The Council supports the Acting Executive Director's leadership and efforts to: move towards discretionary locking of wards; more localised decision-making regarding ward locking; change the culture which underpins treatment in acute mental health wards, and placing a greater focus on building good relationships between clinicians and consumers.

The Council also supports efforts to increase the Peer Support Workforce to support consumers through their recovery, treatment and care.

Review of the Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019

The Council discussed the project plan, developed by the Commission to guide the review of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019* and the associated Action Plans.

The Council was advised that the Commission will be undertaking a comprehensive consultation and engagement process with key stakeholders, including releasing discussion papers for public comment, and engaging with stakeholders through targeted consultation and

community forums. The Council noted that the Commission will also be consulting with Council at key points throughout the review process, and that the review will be a standing agenda item at Council meetings during the review process.

The Council noted that the *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Emotional Wellbeing Action Plan 2016-18* and the *Queensland Rural and Remote Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan 2016-18* are not subject to the review.

Review of the Statute of Limitations

The Council reviewed the Commission's draft submission to the [Government's review of the Statute of Limitations](#).

In its submission, the Commission supports a broad approach which is not limited to sexual abuse, but includes, for example, physical and psychological abuse. One of the findings of the Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions (Forde Inquiry) in 1999 was that other forms of abuse and neglect can cause the same levels of harm for victims. The Commission is of the view that victims of other forms of abuse deserve the same level of legal protection to pursue justice.

The Council was very pleased that the State Government has supported the request of the Commission to plan and consult with those affected by past practices that caused harm to people, who as children in the care of the State, were placed in adult mental health facilities.

Other issues discussed

1. **Queensland Health Services Plan** – The Council welcomes the new health services plan *Connecting Care to Recovery 2016-2021: A plan for Queensland's State-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services* and its focus on delivery state-wide services. The Council noted that the State Government has invested \$350M over five years to implement the Services Plan, but the Council would like to see more detail regarding funding allocated for all initiatives.
2. **Key promotion and awareness events** were discussed by Council. The Council congratulated the Commission for its role in coordinating and supporting World Suicide Prevention Day and Queensland Mental Health Week 2016 events.

The Council was pleased to hear that the registration targets for Queensland Mental Health Week 2016 events substantially exceeded previous years. The Council acknowledged all of the [Queensland Mental Health Week Achievement Award recipients](#).
3. **The communication protocol** between the Commission and the Hospital and Health Services has now been finalised. The Council was pleased to note that the protocol between the Commission, the Chair of the Hospital and Health Board Chairs forum and the Mental Health lead of the Chief Executives Forum will provide a framework for all parties to work together to improve outcomes while pursuing their own functions and priorities.
4. **Grants to improve mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable Queenslanders** – The Council was advised that during Queensland Mental Health Week the Commission announced grants to 15 organisations under the [2016 Stronger Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants Program](#).

Emerging risks to Queensland Reforms

Members identified and discussed a few other important issues for consideration:

- **Providing legal representation to families at individual coronial inquests.** The Council discussed the issue of legal representation for families involved in coronial inquests. The Council asked the Commissioner to inquire with the State Coroner what support and information is available to families who are impacted by coronial hearings.
- **The importance of understanding stigma and discrimination** among mental health staff and its impact on consumers and peer workers. Council discussed the significance of treating people with dignity and respect cannot be underestimated in their recovery.
- **Difficulties experienced with access to services.** The Council expressed concern that access to services continues to remain a problem; in particular for at risk young people who often experience being referred from service to service. It was agreed that the matter should be included on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.
- **National Disability Insurance Agency.** The Council expressed concern about proposed changes to the Board of the National Disability Insurance Agency that would see the current composition of eight members, two of whom have disabilities and two who have children with disability replaced by a Board that requires no lived experience. While the Board must have people who understand finance and investment it must also include those with life experience of people with disability, including both physical and psychosocial.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be on Friday, 9 December 2016.

This meeting will include the annual morning tea to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by stakeholders to the work of the Commission.

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