

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council

Meeting Communiqué

15 September 2017

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council held its fourth meeting for the year on Friday, 15 September in Logan at Access Community Services Limited. In the absence of an appointed Council Chair and Deputy Chair, Professor David Kavanagh was again nominated by the Council members to chair the meeting.

The meeting agenda was focused on the renewal of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019* (the Strategic Plan); and the new Commissioner's vision for the future direction of the Commission.

The Commission and Council invited local community stakeholders to an afternoon tea following the meeting to hear about their experiences and local issues.

Commissioner's vision for the future direction of the Commission

The Council noted the new Commissioner's vision for the Commission's future direction which involves a person-centred approach and working towards system reform that is focused on meeting the needs of all Queenslanders. This includes:

- ensuring that people do not fall through service gaps
- mental health and alcohol and other drugs services working together optimally for people
- public, private and non-government mental health services providing fully integrated responses
- a strong focus on whole of population approaches to mental health, specifically early years
- a strong focus on reducing the rates of suicide and enhancing the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across both service delivery and population approaches.

The Commissioner reflected on the views heard during the consultations to review the Strategic Plan. Many stakeholders were of the view that the current system has been developed to accommodate how and where professionals want to work, rather than a system built for consumers, carers and the broader community.

The Council discussed the importance of maintaining a human-centred approach to ensure that the needs of people with lived experience remain the focus of services and initiatives and that the disadvantages experienced by vulnerable groups are not compounded.

The Council noted the Commissioner's agenda for reform which will be supported by four pillars: improved clinical services; psychosocial supports; housing; and employment.

Renewing Queensland's Strategic Plan

The Council noted the completion of phase one of the Strategic Plan review, with more than 250 people sharing their views at consultation forums held in Cairns, Mount Isa, Townsville, Rockhampton, Ipswich, Logan, Brisbane, Toowoomba and Southport.

The Council noted that consultation feedback was consistent across the State, with a call for reforms focused on service integration between the non-government, government and private sector mental health and alcohol and other drug services; prevention and early intervention; increased engagement of people with a lived experience, reduced stigma, and increased social inclusion.

It was acknowledged that while many of the issues raised by stakeholders are not new, more needs to change. Stakeholders confirmed the need to continue building on what has been achieved to date, and adopting a systemic approach to embedding good practice as core business.

The Council noted that the renewed plan will not only be based on evidence and research, but will be grounded in the everyday experiences of people with lived experience, their families, carers and support people, frontline service providers from all sectors, and the broader community.

The Council was advised that the Commission will be releasing a consultation report on the outcomes from Phase One consultations in October this year, during Queensland Mental Health Week.

The Council noted that the next stage of the renewal process, will involve holding roundtable discussions with stakeholders to identify strategic direction and action required to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and improve the mental health and wellbeing of people living in rural and remote Queensland, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, or intersex. Council members will be invited to participate at the roundtables based on their areas of expertise.

The Commission will consider how to align the renewed Strategic Plan with the recently released *National Drug Strategy 2017-2026* and the soon to be released Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

The Council noted the Commission's consultation to date in relation to the renewal of the Strategic Plan and the completion of Phase One of the review of the Strategic Plan.

Evaluation of the Social Housing Ordinary Report

In 2016, the Queensland Public Service Commission undertook an independent review into the effectiveness of the Queensland Mental Health Commission as requested under the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013*.

The Public Service Commission made 13 recommendations, including:

'Evaluate the key drivers of successful reform in policy and practice arising from the Social Housing Ordinary Report to share with other agencies, and inform the Commission's future agenda and approach.'

This recommendation relates to the Ordinary Report the Commission prepared in 2015, *Social Housing: Systemic issues for tenants with complex needs*. In response to the recommendation, the Commission engaged KPMG to conduct the evaluation of the key drivers of successful reform in policy and practice arising from the Social Housing Ordinary Report.

The KPMG review focused on the process for preparing the Ordinary Report and its role in influencing policy change relating to social housing for tenants with complex needs. The review also focused on the

events leading up to the decision to prepare an Ordinary Report, as well as the activities following its publication, and covered the period from 1 September 2013 to 31 December 2016.

The evaluation report identified three key drivers of policy and practice reform in social housing:

1. **Evidence:** establishing an evidence base to inform policy; quality research and meaningful insights by reputable organisations; ensuring case studies reflecting tenants' lived experience are a focus.
2. **Collaboration:** establishing shared vision and goal; with demonstrated cross level collaboration evident throughout the policy reform process; and socialisation of the findings and recommendations by the Commission.
3. **Role of the Commission:** providing a balanced approach; robust procurement process for research; strategic decision to publish the Ordinary Report; Commission's expertise; and raising the profile of the issue, framing and communicating the message.

The Council was advised of the report's key learnings to help drive ongoing reform towards a more integrated, evidence-based, recovery-oriented system in Queensland. The Commission accepts the recommendations made by KPMG, acknowledging they reflect what the Commission has been doing over the last four years and is committed to continuing into the future.

The Council noted that the Commission will publish the report on its website and share the findings with other government agencies with a view to identifying future opportunities to develop Ordinary Reports, and guide future reform projects.

Other issues discussed

1. **Regional Council meetings** – The Council endorsed holding every second meeting in a regional centre to support the Council's capacity to provide advice to the Commission, by gaining a better understanding of regional issues and strategies to improve mental health and wellbeing. The visits will include meeting with local health services to discuss how they can work with the Commission to bring about change.
2. **Consumer engagement framework** – The Council will be provided with information to assist them in considering how the Stretch2Engage work and Dr Louise Byrne's research can help to inform the work being done by Health Consumers Queensland with the review of their engagement strategy and the Consumer and Carer Engagement Strategy undertaken by the National Mental Health Commission.
3. **Future interaction with the Queensland Disability Advisory Council** – The Council was advised that the Queensland Disability Advisory Council is interested in working with the Council on a number of issues including NDIS and mental health.
4. **Impact of the same sex marriage survey** – The Council will consult with relevant counterparts in the community to gauge what impact the same sex postal survey is having on vulnerable groups and report back at next meeting.
5. **Welfare drug test trial evaluation** – The Council discussed the Commonwealth Government's welfare drug test trial for Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance, which is being implemented from January 2018. The Council expressed concern that the evaluation being conducted during the trial may not consider the impact on the mental health and wellbeing for people living with problematic alcohol and other drug use. This issue will be raised at the Joint Mental Health Commissioners meeting in November.

- 6. GP Mental Health Plans** – The Council discussed the need for people requiring a mental health care plan to access Medicare funded psychological services. This can be a problem for some people, especially in rural and remote Queensland, where people may have to wait for up to two weeks before seeing a general practitioner. There are also associated issues with stigma and long term impact on people’s lives—including limiting employment opportunities in some fields. The Commissioner will raise this issue when he attends the Joint Mental Health Commissioners meeting in November 2017.

Acknowledgements

Ms Carmel Ybarlucea was acknowledged by the Council for her leadership and outstanding work as the Executive Director of the Commission. Ms Ybarlucea is taking up the role of Executive Director of Disability and Inclusion in the Department of Education, Training and Employment.

Council congratulated fellow Council member, Ms Kerrie Keepa, for receiving the [National Suicide Prevention Conference first Local Hero LiFE Award](#). Ms Keepa was recognised for her dedication in increasing suicide awareness and prevention; in particular her significant role in advocating for better mental health training for hospital emergency department staff, and for her work in founding the Survivors of Suicide Fighting Against Suicide Toll.

Logan community stakeholder event

The event provided an opportunity for local government and non-government service providers, and community leaders to meet and share their views for achieving better mental health and wellbeing outcomes for the Logan Community with the Commission and members of the Council.

Guests included senior representatives from the Metro South Hospital and Health Service, Brisbane South Primary Health Network, non-government service providers, local government, former Council members and Community leaders.

The Commissioner provided an overview of the emerging themes from the recent community consultations, and shared his vision for improving mental health, drug and alcohol service systems; including the proposed overarching pillars of reform: improved clinical services; psychosocial approaches; housing; and employment.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 10 November 2017.

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



Mental Health Commissioner Ivan Frkovic with Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council member, Professor David Kavanagh