

## Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council

### Meeting Communiqué

31 August 2015

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The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council convened its ninth meeting in Brisbane on Monday 31 August 2015. The meeting was primarily focussed on the areas of social enterprise and forensic mental health.

The Council welcomed Mr Michael Burge OAM as an observer. Michael provided valuable input throughout the meeting, in particular from his extensive experience as a consumer advocate.

#### Focus on Employment and Criminal Justice

Improving employment outcomes for people with mental health issues, and delivering better outcomes for people with mental health issues involved with the police and the criminal justice system were the priority areas considered at the meeting. This reflected shared commitment to Action Three: Targeted responses in priority areas in the [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014—2019](#).

The Council was provided with a short presentation by Luke Terry and also welcomed Ms Sandy Blackburn-Wright, Director, Social Outcomes to discuss social enterprises for enhancing employment outcomes. Ms Blackburn-Wright was recently engaged by the Commission to develop a paper addressing the specific issues relating to employment opportunities for people with mental health, and/or drug or alcohol issues. Sandy shared with Council the following findings from the [Social Enterprise for Employment Outcomes](#) paper:

- A supportive workplace provides many key avenues for enabling better mental health, whereas an unsupportive workplace can adversely impact on mental health
- The employment outcomes for people with mental illness, from programs delivered through Job Services Australia (JSA), Disability Management Service (DMS) and Employment Support Services (ESS), have been disappointing
- Social enterprises can create flexible, supportive workplaces that provide long term employment and a pathway for transitioning to mainstream employment
- Social procurement can be leveraged to help grow and secure the financial sustainability of social enterprises

Council would like to see Queensland Government support initiatives to enhance the mental health, social and employment outcomes for people living with mental health problems and substance use issues, such as the creation of a Queensland social enterprise investment readiness fund by the Queensland Government to expand employment opportunities for people with a lived experience of mental illness and substance use issues.

Council supported the initiative of working with Queensland government to mainstream the approach of “social procurement” into its procurement policy framework and building the capacity of Queensland government’s procurement teams in assessing social impact creation. Council was advised that more information about social procurement can be found at [www.socialprocurementaustralia.com](http://www.socialprocurementaustralia.com)

Council members were advised that the Australian Human Rights Commission has announced a National Willing to Work Inquiry into employment discrimination against older Australians and Australians with a disability. The Inquiry is seeking a wide range of views through a call for submissions and a series of [consultations](#) and roundtables being held across Australia. The [Submissions](#) were opened on 26 June 2015 are expected to close 4 December 2015. The Commission will prepare a submission in partnership with the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland and Council members will support this by providing their input.

Dr Ed Heffernan, Director, Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service attended the meeting, provided a presentation and discussed reforms at the interface of mental health services and the police and the criminal justice system. Members were encouraged by the reforms being undertaken to enhance the responsiveness of mental health services for individuals with mental illness coming into contact with police.

Members strongly supported the Commission’s decision to provide funding to the Queensland Forensic Mental Health Service to undertake research into police interactions with people experiencing mental illness or a mental health crisis including research into police interviews and siege negotiations.

Members identified the following areas as critical for improving the outcomes for people with mental health and addiction issues in contact with the police, criminal justice system and emergency services:

1. Introduction of the new Mental Health Bill 2015
2. Introduction of the new Mental Health Services Plan
3. Improved partnerships with non-Government sector
4. Building collaboration with Queensland Police Service, including a review of the content and mode of delivery of the mental health and drug issues training for police officers
5. Queensland Ambulance Service role in dealing with mental health and drug issues.

### **Other issues discussed**

1. Council requested that the Commissioner write to the Disability Services Minister to seek an update on the NDIS implementation and funding for community-managed mental health services.
2. Council members raised concerns over the current state of the training and support provided by the Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) to consumer and carers engaged in various HHS committees and boards. The Council Chair will write to the Commissioner requesting this issue be taken up with each HHS.
3. Concern was also raised about the lack of training for health professionals about working more effectively with consumers and carers
4. Council welcomed the news that the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders in Mental Health’s (NATSILMH) finalised the Australian adaption of the

wellbeing and suicide prevention. The adaption titled Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration was launched at the TheMHS Conference in Canberra on the 27 August 2015.

5. Council was pleased that the opportunity was provided for broad input was provided through into the Awareness Promotion and Early Intervention Action Plan via the discussion paper and welcomed the news that the Action Plan should be released during Mental Health Week 2015.
6. The theme for [World Suicide Prevention Day](#) is 'Reaching Out and Saving Lives'. Council welcomed the Commission's support for [Roses in the Ocean](#) to help prepare public events for Brisbane and Hervey Bay aimed at connecting communities with their local service providers from the suicide prevention and mental health sectors and encouraging people to reach out for help if needed.
7. Council noted that the Commission had offered to sponsor two additional places at TheMHS for consumer/carer representatives. However the TheMHS organisers advised that there were only 2 people from Queensland who qualified for a bursary and they had already budgeted for that. The Commission sought advice from the Council on providing financial support to consumers, families and carers to attend conferences as a way of building capacity. Council advised that support should be provided to conferences such as the Suicide Prevention Australia conference, TheMHS or the Australian Winter School if it facilitates the implementation of the Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and contributes to knowledge sharing and exchange to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.
8. Council reviewed its meeting schedule for 2016 and proposed the regional meeting should be held in mid-2016. This will provide members another opportunity to meet with various stakeholders to discuss local issues.

### Next meeting

- The next Council meeting is scheduled for 19 October 2015 and will include a focus on promoting awareness and early intervention.

For any enquiries relating to the Communique please contact the Council Secretariat:  
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