

Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Meeting

14 April 2014 Brisbane, Australia

Meeting Communique

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council met for the first time in Brisbane on Monday, 14 April 2014. The first meeting of the Council was primarily focused on the role of the Council, the work of the Queensland Mental Health Commission to date, directions for the whole-of-government strategic plan and issues currently impacting people living with and recovering from mental health and problematic substance use, their families, carers and support people and the wider community.

A full day was spent in a spirit of shared purpose to explore future directions for the Council and Queensland Mental Health Commission. Council members were given the opportunity to get to know their new colleagues and each other's motivations for applying for Council membership. The focus then turned to key priority areas of focus for the Commission. Discussion topics included, but were not limited to:

1. Whole-of-government strategic plan
2. Establishment of committees of the Council
3. Social housing for clients with mental health and/or substance use problems
4. Securing of adult acute public mental health facilities
5. Rural and remote mental health
6. Collaborative mechanisms being established with key stakeholders

1 Whole-of-government strategic plan

The Commission has been tasked with preparing a whole-of-government strategic plan for the improvement of mental health and the limiting of harm associated with problematic substance use, to be submitted to the Minister for Health following consultation with the Council.

Agreeing on a clear vision is the first step towards delivering a Strategic Plan that communicates a shared understanding of the directions for the mental health and drug sector in Queensland.

The Council reviewed the proposed overall structure of the Strategic Plan and agrees with the proposed vision:

‘A healthy and inclusive community where people living with mental illness or problems with substance use have a life with purpose and access to quality care and support focused on wellness and recovery in an understanding, empathic and compassionate society.’

The Strategic Plan will be discussed in more detail at the next Council meeting.

2 Establishment of committees of the Council

The Council agrees with the key messages raised in the Commission consultations held in 2013, in that there should be a greater focus on consumers, their families and carers being involved at all levels of the mental health, alcohol and drug system and the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be heard at all levels and solutions found to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

As such, two committees of the Council will be established; an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee and a Consumers, Families and Carers Committee. They will be chaired by Council members Professor Gracelyn Smallwood and Ms Jan Kealton.

3 Social housing for clients with mental health and/or substance use problems

Social housing is designed for vulnerable people who are capable of living independently. The Government’s antisocial behaviour policy has been legislated and focuses on the small number of tenants whose continued antisocial behaviour disturbs the peace and risks the safety of neighbourhoods. There is some concern that there will be unintended consequences of this and other proposed changes for people with mental illness or drug and alcohol problems. While a small number of tenants may be unable to live independently without disrupting their neighbourhood, there may also be systemic issues that need to be addressed to achieve improved outcomes for social housing clients with complex needs.

To address this, the Council will be participating in a review the Commission is undertaking of systemic issues for social housing clients with complex needs. Council members Mr Kingsley Bedwell and Professor Brenda Happell were nominated to take part in a Governance Group which will oversee the review with key Commission staff.

It is intended that the outcome of this review will take the form of an Ordinary Report which will be tabled by the Minister for Health in the Legislative Assembly.

4 Securing of adult acute public mental health facilities

The Council deliberated on two key areas of concern in response to the Department of Health’s recent decision to lock adult acute public mental health facilities:

- The wider context in which adult acute mental health facilities should be locked, considering the clinical and nonclinical complexities.
- The inappropriate and distressing way in which this issue was reported in some sections of the media.

The Commission will be undertaking a review of the published evidence to update understanding about the appropriateness of locked/unlocked wards. The Council looks forward to further discussion when this review has been received.

5 Rural and remote mental health

Access to services for Queenslanders living in rural and remote areas is a current priority issue which needs to be addressed. The Commission is undertaking work with regard to rural and remote mental health and drug and alcohol issues which will result in the development of an action plan. This will also be addressed in the whole-of-government strategic plan.

Council members Dr Christian Rowan, Mr Mitchell Giles and Mr Luke Terry will work with the Commission to progress this work.

6 Agreements being established with key stakeholders

Communicating and collaborating with key stakeholders is imperative for a shared understanding of the directions for the mental health and drug sector in Queensland. Queensland Hospital and Health Services are one group of key stakeholders who have a significant involvement in the treatment of people experiencing mental illness and problems with substance use.

Along with Commission staff, each Council member will take a specific interest in one or two Hospital and Health Services in order to develop a depth of understanding of local mental health and drug issues. Council members will remain abreast of local issues pertaining to mental health and substance use in their allocated Hospital and Health Service and attend local events where possible.

Next Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 12 May 2014.