

Media statement

14 February 2017

Queenslanders urged to take part in renewal of mental health, drug and alcohol strategic plan

The high level plan which sets the direction of action to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders is being renewed.

People with lived experience of mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drug use and those affected by suicide, along with families, carers and supporters are being encouraged to take part in a state-wide review.

The *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019* is a whole of government plan for all Queenslanders. First developed in 2014, many additional commitments have been made towards achieving the six long-term outcomes described in the plan.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said the time was right to renew the plan to ensure that efforts continue to focus on the needs of Queenslanders.

“Improving mental health and wellbeing takes time and it is important that our efforts are continually reviewed to ensure they meet the changing needs of Queenslanders and align with recent reforms,” Dr van Schoubroeck said.

“It is important that the voices of all Queenslanders, from all sectors, are heard during the renewal process. It is particularly important that the voices of people with a lived experience of mental illness, mental health difficulties, suicide and alcohol and other drug issues are heard.”

The Queensland Mental Health Commission will hold a number of consultation forums on the Strategic Plan from next month.

- Rockhampton — 13 & 14 March
- Mount Isa — 23 & 24 March
- Ipswich — 28 & 29 March
- Logan — 4 & 5 April
- Brisbane — 10 & 11 April
- Townsville — 8 & 9 May
- Cairns — 10 & 11 May
- Toowoomba — 1 & 2 June

Dr van Schoubroeck said significant mental health reform, new actions and services had been delivered across Queensland, as noted in a progress report released this week.

The Commission’s **Annual Implementation Report 2015-16** found that of more than 190 actions committed to by 22 Queensland Government agencies as part of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-19* had commenced, with 21 completed.

“This report demonstrates substantial reform in many areas is underway or is being implemented across sectors, including in health, education, community services, housing and justice,” Dr van Schoubroeck said.

“Reform is continuous, and while many reforms are underway and actions taken, there is a need to continue our efforts and consider our next steps to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

A separate report on the state’s key mental health performance indicators provides another major input into the Strategic Plan review to ensure that future strategies deliver progress towards long-term improvement in Queenslanders’ mental health and wellbeing.

The Queensland Mental Health Commission’s **2016 Performance Indicators** report, also released this week, includes previously unpublished data which shows a 16% increase in hospitalisations associated with alcohol and substance use harm, up from 13,424 in 2014-15 to 15,567 in 2015-16.¹

Dr van Schoubroeck said: “While it is not clear if the increase was a result of increasing harms or increased access to services and support, it does reinforce the need for Queenslanders to think seriously about their relationship with alcohol and other drugs.”

In other findings contained in the 2016 Performance Indicators report, the proportion of Queenslanders reporting high or very high psychological distress has increased over a three-year period from 10.8 percent in 2011-12 to 12% in 2014-15. This was consistent with a similar increase nationally.

On a positive note, 95% of people with a mental health condition reported visiting a GP in the last 12 months in 2014-15.

Dr van Schoubroeck said achieving long-term outcomes in mental health and wellbeing was challenging, particularly when they are influenced by a wide variety of factors.

“Measuring outcomes and monitoring progress enables us to assess whether our collective efforts are making a positive difference and to identify those areas which require greater focus and effort,” she said.

Further information on the Strategic Plan review, including discussion papers, is available at www.qmhc.qld.gov.au

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About QMHC: The Queensland Mental Health Commission was established to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders by driving ongoing reform.

¹ Source: Queensland Hospital Admitted Patient Data Collection, Queensland Department of Health, 2016