

Media statement

19 May 2016

Sector unites to value mental health

Queensland's leading mental health advocacy and support groups today joined forces to highlight the value of mental health and wellbeing in the face of national funding changes that could impact the delivery of some specialised services.

At the sector launch of Mental Health Week, to be held from 9 to 15 October, Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck drew attention to moves to integrate the Butterfly Foundation's telephone and web-based support service for people with eating disorders into a centralised national gateway for mental health services from July next year.

Dr van Schoubroeck told Queensland's mental health sector leaders that while national reform of the mental health system is needed, it must not create further barriers to people seeking to access specialised services.

"If this integration goes ahead, it must be done in such a way that people with eating disorders can still find the information they need, when they need it, Dr van Schoubroeck said.

"It will be important to talk to people with lived experience to ensure that any changes to simplify the helpline process do not unintentionally stop people with eating disorders from seeking help early.

"The rate of eating disorders is increasing with more than two million Australians experiencing some form of eating disorder.ⁱ

"In the lead-up to Queensland Mental Health Week this October, we need to be alert to reforms that may result in a loss of connection between specialised services and those that need to access them," Dr van Schoubroeck said.

The Queensland Mental Health Commission is leading a Queensland Mental Health Week collaboration between government and non-government organisations to increase awareness about the value of mental health.

Queenslanders are more likely to experience higher levels of psychological distress than people living in most other states and territories. An estimated 900,000 Queenslanders are living with mental illness.ⁱⁱ

Dr van Schoubroeck said: "Mental Health Week provides an opportunity to turn the spotlight on the value of mental health by tackling the taboos and encouraging people to take positive steps to improve their mental wellbeing.

"Many Queenslanders continue to take their mental health and wellbeing for granted but the reality is that virtually every Queenslanders knows someone who is living with a mental illness or health problem," Dr Schoubroeck said.

“It’s great to see increasing numbers of individuals, communities and workplaces across Queensland celebrating and valuing our mental health and wellbeing.”

Queensland Mental Health Week runs from October 9 to 15, and includes World Mental Health Day on October 10.

Among a range of activities planned for the week, the achievements of individuals and organisations in the sector will be acknowledged at the Queensland Mental Health Achievement Awards on Friday 14 October 2016.

Further information on Queensland Mental Health Week events, as well as resources for individuals, workplaces and others to value mental health, is available at qldmentalhealthweek.org.au

ENDS

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

ⁱ Hay, Mond, Buttner & Darby, 2008. Quoted in *An integrated response to complexity: National Eating Disorders Framework 2012*, National Eating Disorders Collaboration

ⁱⁱ Queensland Mental Health Commission *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015-17*, p3