

Media statement

17 June 2016

New Advisory Council brings insight and experience

The Queensland Mental Health Commission today welcomed the appointment of a new Chair and ten new Members of the Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council.

Dr Peggy Brown has been appointed to Chair the Advisory Council. She is a strong advocate for people with mental health and substance use issues and has around 30 years' experience in the mental health sector.

Dr Brown lives in Queensland and commutes to the Northern Territory as part time Chief Psychiatrist. She was Director-General of ACT Health for five years and has previously held positions including as a former Chief Psychiatrist and Director of Mental Health in both Queensland and the ACT.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck said: "I look forward to working closely with the new Chair and the Advisory Council.

"Queensland is fortunate to have an extremely well-credentialed and experienced Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council that includes strong regional representation, strengthened lived experience and representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

"The Commission will benefit from fresh and diverse thinking as well as experience and continuity from the four continuing members of the Advisory Council.

"On behalf of the Commission, I would like to thank the outgoing members of the Council, including former Chair Professor Harvey Whiteford. Their combined contribution during the first two years of the state's first independent Mental Health Commission has been invaluable.

"This has included contributions to the first *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan*, a critical foundation to improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for all Queenslanders. The Council has also guided development of the associated whole-of-government action plans, provided input into reform of mental health legislation and provided advice on the Commission's role and priorities.

"I was also encouraged by the calibre of the more than 100 applicants for the Advisory Council positions. The ongoing interest and contribution of these applicants to the work of the Commission is vital and I would encourage them to participate through our ongoing consultation and engagement activities."

The new Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Members are:

- **Jeremy Audas** – CEO of the Mental Illness Fellowship of North Queensland, Jeremy has been actively involved in the region's community services, including homelessness, and disability and led a team that transitioned a major drug and alcohol diversion service from government control to a community-based organisation.

- **Janice Crosbie** – Janice’s experience of living with a mental illness has led to her personal interest in helping to establish consumer-operated services, volunteering with independent community-based organisations. During her journey of recovery, Janice has developed a deep understanding of the barriers and challenges faced when navigating the mental health system.
- **Professor David Kavanagh** – David is a psychologist with a strong commitment to improving outcomes for people with mental health problems and issues related to substance use. With 41 years’ experience in clinical psychology research, education and practice, David has been involved in a number of projects related to e-strategies such as web programs, web-based treatments and apps for addressing mental health issues and problems related to alcohol and other drug use. He currently leads the Federal Department of Health’s e-Mental Health in Practice project, which rolls out e-mental health nationally in primary care and advises on the future of e-mental health.
- **Kerrie Keepa** – Kerrie is a strong and vocal advocate for better resourcing and greater suicide prevention and awareness training for hospital emergency staff. Ms Keepa has lost several members of her family to suicide, including her 21-year-old son Chris. She recently launched Survivors of Suicide Fighting Against Suicide Toll (SOS FAST) to continue to highlight the need for action to reduce suicide.
- **Emma Kill** – Emma is an associate lecturer and social researcher at the University of the Sunshine Coast with 15 years’ experience working in the community sector. She is Vice President of the Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuiHN) management board and former board member for Sunshine Coast Integrated Voice Action Association, a peer-based organisation for injecting drug users.
- **Martina McGrath** – Drawing on her own lived experienced, Martina has founded Australia’s first support group for suicide attempt survivors. Her personal journey included her own suicide attempt in 2013 following a long period of multi-layered social and mental health problems. Today Martina works with other survivors to raise awareness and provide support. She attended AISRAP’s 2014 World Suicide Prevention Day Forum as a Lived Experience delegate.
- **Hamza Vayani** – As the Executive Officer for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHIMA), Hamza’s work focused on advocating for improved service access and delivery outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse communities requiring mental health services, and in improving the level of consumer and carer participation.
- **Samantha Wild** – Samantha is a proud Wakka Wakka and South Sea Islander woman and the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Project Manager for Headspace. She has a strong interest in improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and advocating for safe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health care within mainstream health services.
- **Jane Williams** – A registered nurse with 25 years’ experience working in rural and remote areas of Western Queensland, Jane holds qualifications in rural and remote health, community services coordination, nursing, midwifery, immunisation and rural isolated practice. In addition to her roles as a Chair of the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Board, and Chair of the Central West Rural Health Network, she also provides care to people with a chronic disease as a Wellness Nurse in Barcaldine.
- **Dr Mark Wenitong** – Mark is from the Kabi Kabi tribal group of South Queensland and is passionate about improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Involved in both clinical and policy work throughout his career, Mark is currently Public Health Medical Officer at Apunipima Cape York Health Council. He was previously a Senior Medical Officer at Wuchopperen Health Services in Cairns, a Medical Advisor for the Office for Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) in Canberra, the acting CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), and has worked in community development with World Vision in Papunya, Northern Territory. Mark is a past president and founder of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association.

The new Advisory Council members have been appointed by the Queensland Government for three years. They join four continuing members, with the 15-member Advisory Council meeting for the first time today.

Further information on the Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council 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.

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