

Live Well Working Group *Connected and inclusive communities*

August 2016

On 31 August 2016, the Queensland Mental Health Commission and the Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOS) co-hosted the first meeting of the Live Well Working Group.

The working group brings together government agencies and their non-government partners to support the implementation of the *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17*, focusing on the mental health and wellbeing of Queensland communities.

The first meeting comprised representatives from:

- Queensland Mental Health Commission
- Queensland Council of Social Service
- Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland
- beyondblue
- Primary Healthcare Network
- Department of Employment (Australian Government)
- Department of Social Services (Australian Government)
- Central Highlands Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and the Department of National Parks, Sport and Racing
- Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland
- Maudsley International
- Northern and Western Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- Queensland Alliance for Mental Health
- Queensland Families and Communities Association
- Queensland Voice for Mental Health Incorporated
- University of Southern Queensland.

An overview was provided of current strategies, practices and research on improving the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders. Discussion focused on what is being done well for mental health in Queensland communities, what needs to be done better, and what role the working group can play.

Strategic priorities in mental health and wellbeing in Queensland communities

Carmel Ybarlucea, Executive Director, Queensland Mental Health Commission, set the scene outlining Queensland Government priorities with implications for how we support the mental health and wellbeing of Queensland communities.

The [Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019](#) seeks to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders through a focus on:

- better services
- better awareness, prevention and early intervention
- better engagement and collaboration
- better transparency and accountability.

A series of whole-of-government action plans have been developed to support the Strategic Plan, including [Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17](#).

Live Well is one of five priority areas identified in this Action Plan. This priority area focuses on improving community understanding of positive mental health and wellbeing, addressing stigma and discrimination, supporting those at risk and early intervention and detection.

Working Groups for the Start and Develop Well, Age Well and Work Well priority areas are also being convened. The importance of ensuring communication across the groups was acknowledged, as was the need to be inclusive of the needs of people with severe and persistent mental illness.

Queensland Council of Social Service Report: Queensland's Wellbeing 2016

Mark Henley, CEO QCOSS outlined the *Queensland's Wellbeing 2016* report that was released on 11 April 2016. The report contains data and analysis focused on the wellbeing of Queensland families and individuals.

The report follows QCOSS's Queensland Wellbeing Framework that contains seven domains for wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities under which measures can be set. The domains are safe; healthy; strong personal relationships; community connections; adequate standard of living; achieving in life; and secure future. Data on indicators related to each of the domains is provided.

This data helps to identify areas of disadvantage as well as those factors that can improve or erode wellbeing. Looking at wellbeing within the holistic context of broader social, political, economic and environmental circumstances provides a basis to effectively respond to need.

It was suggested by Working Group members that although policies aimed at supporting community wellbeing are often reasonable, the way they are implemented can result in poor outcomes or return.

The key to better outcomes can often occur through strong local engagement and action. This includes seeking local agreement on what wellbeing for a given community looks like.

In this respect government services and providers need to see themselves as partners, not competitors in supporting the wellbeing of communities. This was seen as particularly important within rural and remote communities.

The QCOSS report is available at www.qcoss.org.au/qcoss-queenslands-wellbeing-2016-report.

Embedding mental wellbeing into policy and practice: An international perspective

Tony Coggins, the Mental Health Promotion Lead with Maudsley International provided an overview of the work being undertaken in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Maudsley International works in partnership to influence mental wellbeing through capacity building, developing understanding and providing mental wellbeing services.

Two frameworks were outlined: Wheel of Wellbeing (WOW) that is used to strengthen individual wellbeing, and Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment that is applied at the structural and policy level.

The WOW is a flexible framework founded on positive psychology that focuses on six aspects of wellbeing: body, mind, spirit, people, place and planet. In partnership with the QMHC, the Department of Education and Training, and Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs, capacity is being strengthened across Queensland to apply the framework. Stakeholders from the Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs in Central Highlands, Logan and Northern and Western Queensland, along with Department of Education staff, have recently completed intensive training in the theory and application of the framework.

Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment, based on health impact assessment methodology, provides a structured, evidence based analysis of how policies, proposals, programs and projects potentially influence mental health and wellbeing. In September 2016, screening training and practical application sessions were provided to a range of government and community stakeholders for use in Queensland communities.

Evidence highlights that promoting mental wellbeing is associated with reductions in suicide, physical illness and mental illness in children, adolescents and adults. Other benefits include improved educational outcomes, healthier lifestyles, increased productivity at work and community participation, positive social relationships, and reduced risk taking, anti-social behaviour, crime and violence.

Identifying what we are doing well and could do better

The working group welcomed the opportunity to learn more about what is happening across sectors and acknowledged the particular value of dialogue across government, non-government and community sectors at a strategic and policy level.

Examples of successful locally-led community initiatives that support the mental health and wellbeing of Queensland were identified and included the piloting of the [Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs](#) and the Men's Shed initiative.

The Northern and Western Queensland Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub spoke of the success of initiatives designed by, and requested by local communities. The Hub acknowledged the value of

supporting communities rather than imposing initiatives on groups.

Following a request by members, the next Live Well Working Group meeting will showcase the Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs initiative and the locally led solutions it is generating. The Central Highlands Hub indicated that the value of this is in understanding, and being responsive to, the differences between communities.

It was recognised that while there have been welcome developments in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of local communities, there is still room to build on these achievements. Areas identified as needing particular focus were:

- ensuring that people with lived experience of severe and persistent mental illness are engaged in designing initiatives
- promoting greater integration and alignment of mental health and wellbeing in other areas of significant policy reform such as the Child and Family Reform agenda
- improving the broader view of mental health and wellbeing
- engaging, empowering and supporting communities rather than imposing initiatives.

Members expressed a desire to have the opportunity to further identify what was working well and what improvements could be made to support communities.

Our next steps

The Live Well Working Group will continue to inform the implementation of *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Acton Plan 2015–17*.

The group will also help shape the future of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019* and associated action plans. Further advice will be provided on the process for reviewing of the Strategic Plan in the near future.

The next meeting of the Live Well Working Group will be in early 2017.

Further information

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