

Update for the Australian Mental Health Commissions



The Queensland Mental Health Commission's purpose is to drive ongoing reform towards a more integrated, evidence-based, recovery-oriented mental health, alcohol and other drug system within Queensland.

A snapshot of our work

Queensland's Strategic Plan

The Commission has recently released two reports which monitor progress towards the implementation of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*.

Annual Implementation Report

The [Annual Implementation Report 2015–16](#) (Implementation Report) provides an overview of the action taken by Queensland Government agencies, often in partnership with non-government organisations, to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

It also highlights implementation of the three whole-of-government action plans released in 2015, the:

- *Early action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action 2015–17*
- *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–17*
- *Queensland Alcohol and other Drugs Action Plan 2015–17*.

The Commission has published an [electronic dashboard](#) which shows the implementation status of each of the 193 actions by 22 government agencies.

Performance Indicators Report

The [2016 Performance Indicators Report](#), the second in a series of reports that measures the progress being made towards the six outcomes identified in the Strategic Plan.

This report reflects the need identified in the draft Fifth National Mental Health Plan for accurate and timely information to allow consumers, carers, providers and governments to monitor mental health system reforms and implementation of commitments.

Performance indicator and data gaps still remain around the measurement of whole-of-community wellbeing and stigma associated with mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drug use, and suicide.

These performance indicators and data gaps require further collective consideration and action at a national level and is something that Commissions might consider progressing together.

Strategic Plan renewal

The Commission has recently launched a review process to renew the Strategic Plan.

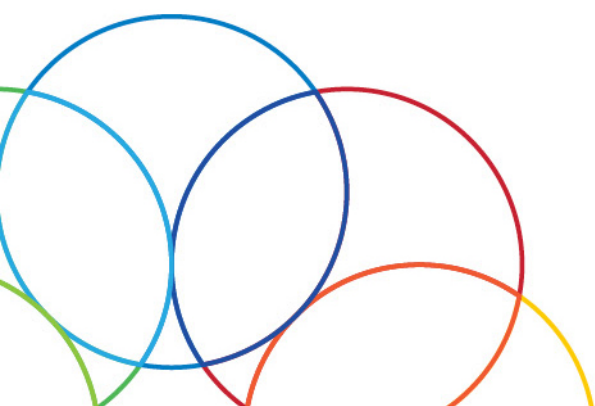
The renewal process seeks to ensure that the Strategic Plan released in 2014 continues to meet the needs of Queenslanders given the implementation of a range of actions over the past two years, changes in service delivery and State and Commonwealth policy changes.

Supporting people to live lives with purpose

The Commission has recently commenced work in partnership with the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works to facilitate social outcomes in government procurement approaches.

An outcome of this project will be to improve the number of social enterprises which are able to secure government contracts. This in turn can help generate jobs for vulnerable Queenslanders, including those living with mental illness.

This complements work supported by the Commission that has seen the establishment of the [Vanguard Laundry](#) in Toowoomba through the initiative of the Toowoomba Clubhouse and supported with \$1M from the federal government.



Health system performance

The Commission is working in partnership with Queensland Health to enhance understanding of financial resources allocated to mental health, alcohol and other drugs programs and services by Queensland Health and the Commonwealth Government, and acquittal of these funds.

This project was initiated in response to concerns raised by a number of the Commission's stakeholders regarding the use of funding allocated for mental health and for alcohol and other drug services in the public health system.

The ultimate goal is to increase confidence that resources allocated to mental health, alcohol and other drugs are leading to better outcomes. An analysis of State Budget papers and Annual reports shows that no jurisdictions appear to have a clear and straightforward line of sight over the allocation to integrated mental health services and expenditure at the regional level on those services.

Respecting people's human rights

Commission is currently commissioning research to identify the effectiveness of human rights protection in Queensland (within a national context) for people with a mental illness receiving involuntary treatment hospital or community settings. We expect to award a contract by end of April.

The *Mental Health Act 2016* comes into effect from March 2017. One of the important changes in this Act includes the creation and appointment of Independent Patient Rights Advisers (IPRA) who are employed / engaged by Hospital and Health Services.

The role of the IPRA is to act independently and impartially in providing advice to patients of their rights under the Act. The Commission has expressed concern about the actual independence of these appointments. They are not likely to meet the requirements of independent oversight required by OPCAT.

We are also concerned about the lack of visibility of psychiatric hospitals in the government's [statement](#) on 10 February 2017 about OPCAT which says in part:

*'Attorney-General George Brandis said the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) would be ratified by the end of this year. Australia's **prisons and immigration detention centres** would then be monitored by a network of independent inspecting bodies, which could include existing human rights bodies.'*

Addressing stigma

The Commission has engaged EY Sweeney to undertake qualitative research on mental stigma and discrimination in the workplace and how it impacts on people looking for a maintaining employment. The report is due for public release in the last half of 2017.

The research will include in depth interviews with people with a lived experience of mental health issues, employers, academics and advocates and will be used to inform a future employment focused stigma reduction strategy.

In May 2016, the Commission engaged the Drug Policy Modelling Program, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, University of New South Wales to undertake a project focused on research to identify effective ways of reducing stigma and discrimination which has a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of people experiencing problematic alcohol and other drug use. The report is due for public release by about mid-2017.

Suicide prevention research and other actions

The Commission is developing, in partnership with Queensland's data custodians, a Suicide Data and Information Sharing Network to enhance the way suicide-related data is collected and used to support suicide prevention at a state and local level. This value adds to the Queensland Suicide Register developed by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention (AISRAP) and funded by the Commission.

The Commission engaged Health Outcomes International to undertake research into information and training available for different culturally and linguistically diverse communities regarding suicide prevention. The report is due for public release by about mid-2017.

The Commission engaged Orygen to review resources available to people who are bereaved by suicide as part of its commitments made under the *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–17*. The project involved consultation with people with a lived experience of suicide including those who have been bereaved and those who have attempted suicide. The report is due for public release by May 2017.

The Commission hosted a presentation to Members of the Queensland Parliament and their staff from Mindframe regarding suicide prevention in February. The presentation aims to increase their awareness of suicide prevention and how to talk to members of the

public and the media about suicide in a non-stigmatising way.

Building community capacity

The Commission is supporting three community organisations to pilot Regional Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs to develop, deliver and review the effectiveness of regional approaches to building capacity and capability for sustainable and evidence based mental health and wellbeing activity at the local level.

The Commission has partnered with Maudsley International to work with the Hubs, and other government and non-government agencies, to enhance awareness, knowledge and skills for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing at the individual and community levels. A significant focus for this work has been on embedding evidence-based tools including the Wheel of Wellbeing program and Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment.

I have provided a five year in principal commitment to support of the National Employment Program pilot in Queensland. This program was developed by the University of Western Australia and is being delivered in Queensland by Ngoonbi Community Services Indigenous Corporation. The program aims to improve community social and emotional wellbeing. This is a developmental project requiring ongoing negotiations to ensure its effectiveness and appropriateness to each of the communities involved.

Community awareness

The Commission has taken a lead role in coordinating a whole of state response to Mental Health Week over the last two years. We have adopted a theme 'Value Mental Health' that we anticipate will remain in place over a number of years.

In 2017, we intend to adopt a similar approach to World Suicide Prevention Day, but adopting the international theme. A Brisbane-based NGO, Roses in the Ocean, has successfully lobbied to have a 'Roses' theme adopted by the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP).

We would be happy to contribute to any national collaboration with either of these events.

Promoting lived experience

The proposed review of the Commission's legislation has excluded additional roles for Commissioners / Deputy Commissioners with lived experience. We are now considering how best to increase our capability administratively.

Current activity includes:

- mapping and measuring the level, type and range of engagement of service users, consumers, families and carers within mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors
- the development of best practice principles for engaging service users in the design and delivery of mental health, alcohol and other drugs services—the Stretch2Engage Framework for Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drug Services was developed by the sector
- supporting a lived experience academic to promote and write on the topic of increasing the role of people with a lived experience in the mental health sector.

Other emerging issues

The Commission has heard that it is difficult for people discharged from private hospitals to receive community based services and support due to restrictions in funding agreements. This is of significant concern when coupled with the pressure of Health Insurance companies to limit access to mental health treatment.

Responsibility for developing a whole-of-government response to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder may become part of our work program

Effectiveness of the Commission

Public Service Commission – Effectiveness review

In 2016, the Queensland Public Service Commission undertook an independent review of the effectiveness of the Queensland Mental Health Commission as required by the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013*.

The Minister has noted that the findings were positive in respect of the Commission's performance providing a strong foundation for the future.

The report made 13 recommendations and the Commission has released a [response](#) to each.

Review of the Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013

The *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013* (the Act) requires the Minister to review the Act's effectiveness after three years. Changes to the form and functions of the Commission are outside the [Terms of Reference](#). The review is currently underway.

Evaluation of effectiveness

The Commission contracts Paxton Partners to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Commission which relies on direct feedback from stakeholders.

The evaluation of the 2015–16 financial year found that there was a distinct and appropriate shift of the Commission's activity towards the support for implementation of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014-2019*. Respondents from all sectors reported that collaboration between their organisation and the Commission will be essential to achieving their future strategic goals.

In 2017 we hope to include perceptions of collaboration with the Department of Health, Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and Hospital and Health Services so that the graph below (Figure 1) is available for each group.

Significant statewide initiatives

Several major initiatives are underway led by other agencies:

- Queensland Health is implementing two strategies which were released recently:
 - [Connecting care to recovery 2016-2021: A plan for Queensland's State-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services](#)
 - [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Strategy](#)
- the Queensland Government is undertaking a review of the parole system in Queensland and have released the [Review Report](#)
- the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have released for public consultation a draft plan [Action on Ice](#)
- the Suicide Prevention Health Taskforce which has been funded to address suicide prevention within the health system. It is jointly chaired by Queensland Health, a Primary Health Network representative and a person with lived experience. A report will be available shortly.

Figure 1: Satisfaction with the current level of collaboration with the Commission (2016 Stakeholder Survey)

