



Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council Meeting Communiqué 16 June 2017

The Queensland Mental Health and Drug Advisory Council convened its third meeting for 2017 on Friday, 16 June 2017. In the absence of an appointed Council Chair and Deputy Chair, Professor David Kavanagh was nominated by the Council members to chair the meeting.

The meeting agenda focused on the renewal of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*.

Renewal of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*

The Council noted the Commission's consultation activity to date in relation to the renewal of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*, and update of the three action plans: *Early Action: Queensland Mental Health Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Action Plan 2015–17*; *Queensland Alcohol and other Drugs Action Plan 2015–17*; and the *Queensland Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2015–17*.

The Council noted the key themes that emerged from the consultation process.

The Council also provided feedback on the key elements of the renewed strategic plan and endorsed the draft policy framework, vision, objective, principles, pillars of reform, shared commitments to action, and governance framework of the renewed strategic plan.

The Council nominated Martina McGrath and Samantha Wild to work with the Commission to review the draft strategic plan in its entirety. The Council was invited to identify any specific actions for inclusion in the shared commitments to action by 23 June 2017.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Following discussion at the April 2017 meeting, the Council further considered the issue of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

The Council noted that stakeholders identified FASD as a significant issue and identified gap during the Commission's state-wide consultations to renew the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*. It was noted that to address FASD there needs to be continued actions across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, treatment and support.

The Council was provided with an overview of the strategies and initiatives that are currently being implemented or planned by Queensland Health.

The Council agreed to the next steps to progress this topic including the Commission scoping the current FASD issues, research, and programs and inviting guest speakers to the Council meeting in August 2017.

Other issues discussed

- 1. Human rights research**—The Council noted the Commission has engaged the University of New South Wales that will partner with Griffith University and the University of Sydney, to undertake research which will deliver a framework for human rights oversights in Queensland. The research will examine how people receiving involuntary mental health treatment in hospital and in the community, are able to enforce their rights. The work is anticipated to be finalised in early 2019 and will assist the Commission in preparing for a review of elements of the *Mental Health Act 2016* in 2019.
- 2. Reducing stigma and discrimination for people experiencing problematic alcohol and other drug use**—The Council was advised that the Commission has received the final report providing evidence-based analysis of the experiences of stigma and discrimination for people problematic alcohol and other drug use in Queensland. The Commission is expected to release the research report in July 2017 and a response in late 2017 after consulting with agencies on its findings.
- 3. National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)**—The Council noted that the Queensland Mental Health Commission will replace New South Wales to represent Mental Health Commissions on the National Mental Health Sector Reference Group from July 2017. This Group provides advice from a cross section of the mental health sector to the NDIA about the integration of psychosocial disability and mental health into the scheme.
- 4. Commission's fourth annual survey**—The Council noted the interim results of the Commission's fourth annual effectiveness survey. Importantly it shows a rise in the Commission's credibility to 74 per cent, from the Commission's starting point of 68 per cent in 2014. Most indicators are tracking in a positive direction.

Emerging risks to Queensland reforms

The Council members identified the following issues for further consideration:

- Proposed changes to welfare payments**—The Council raised concerns regarding the Commonwealth Government trialling drug testing for Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance from January 2018 in trial locations. It will be a two year trial focused on 5,000 new recipients with random drug testing as a new condition of receiving a payment. Those who test positive will be placed on welfare quarantining.

Recipients who test positive to more than one drug test are to be referred to a contracted medical professional for an assessment and appropriate treatment options.

The Council expressed concern over the potential for greater stigmatisation of people living with problematic alcohol and other drug use, and the lack of clarity about how the referrals to treatment and support will be managed.
- Mental health and national security**—The Council noted a paper prepared by Council on mental health and national security matters. The Council discussed the recent terrorist events in Australia and overseas and linkages being made to drug, alcohol and mental health issues. The Council agreed to give further consideration to issues relating to perceived links between mental illness or distress and terrorism, and between community wellbeing and terrorism.

- The Council agreed to look at how it can contribute towards promoting wellbeing and mental health across communities. It was also agreed that the issue be included on the agenda for the August 2017 Council meeting for further discussion.

Recognition of the Commissioner's achievements

The Council acknowledged the inaugural Commissioner, Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck for her leadership and for her outstanding contributions to the Council and to the work of the Commission. The Council recognised that she established and built up the office into a credible and capable organisation. They also noted her role in championing consumer and carer rights, and working to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be on Friday, 18 August 2017. The meeting agenda will include a presentation by the guest speakers addressing the issue of FASD.

For any enquiries relating to the Communique please contact the Council Secretariat:
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