The 2013 Report Card: where we will shine a light

The Commission announced its focus topics for the 2013 Report Card following its recent meeting in Cairns.

This year the Commission will shine a light on the following key themes and issues in each chapter of the 2013 Report Card:

**Thriving, not just surviving:** One person, diverse needs: living with a mental illness as well as the challenges from difficulties with alcohol and drug use

**Connections with family, friends, culture and community:** Strengthening community understanding

**Ensuring effective support, care and treatment:** Approaches that support recovery, including through peer support

**Something meaningful to do, something to look forward to:** Transitioning from education to independence

**Feeling safe, stable and secure:** The justice system and mental health

**Preventing suicide:** What works in suicide prevention?

In Cairns the Commissioners also agreed that this year’s Report Card will: report back on action and progress against the specific recommendations and findings of the

**What is COAG?**

Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is made up of the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association.

COAG’s role is to initiate and monitor the implementation of nationally significant policy reforms that require cooperative action by all Australian governments.

[Find out more]
2012 Report Card; continue the focus and reporting against the five domains of a contributing life and suicide prevention; and that the emotional health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will be a focus throughout the report.

The first Report Card, in establishing a framework for our ongoing annual reporting, had to rely heavily on existing data. In the next and future Report Cards we will use new and unreported data, including research and data we commission, to help reporting on the current situation, on action and on what needs to change.

We would be pleased to receive any key data to support the 2013 Report Card chapters.

COAG Expert Reference Group meets

Last December the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) welcomed the first Report Card and agreed to provide a response to the Report Card that would “include national indicators and targets for mental health reform”. COAG set up a new Ministerial Working Group on Mental Health Reform, chaired by Minister Butler and Minister Wooldridge, to develop this new set of national indicators and targets and to provide advice to COAG on reform, data sharing and other matters.

COAG also asked the Commission to chair a new Expert Reference Group (ERG) to support the Ministerial Working Group. With Australian governments finalising membership of the ERG last week, Professor Allan Fels will chair the first meeting of the ERG tomorrow, 10 April.

ERG members, nominated by the Commonwealth and states and territories, are:

Professor Allan Fels (Chair), National Mental Health Commission

Consumer and Carer Representatives nominated by the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, Ms Ailsa Rayner, Consumer representative, Ms Judy Bentley, Carer representative (Ms Margaret Springgay, Proxy Carer representative if Ms Bentley is unavailable)

Commonwealth
Mr Frank Quinlan
Mental Health Council of Australia

Victoria
Professor Jayashri Kulkarni
Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre

Western Australia
Mrs Danuta Pawelek
WA Mental Health Commission

Tasmania
Mr Darren Carr
Minister Butler has indicated to the Commission that he expects that the ERG will provide frank and fearless advice to governments on a set of aspirational and achievable whole of life, outcome based national indicators and targets that will set a ‘destination’ for Australia. Nevertheless the Commission will continue its own independent view on the measures of success it reports in the annual National Report Card.

We will also be pushing hard for the ERG to develop advice on indicators and targets that will be supported by the community. To do so we have asked the Mental Health Council of Australia to consult people with lived experience, families and supporters, service providers and the broader academic fraternity to support the ERG’s task.

**Coming soon - visit our website for updates on the ERG**

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**A call to COAG on National Close the Gap Day**

On **National Close the Gap Day**, the Commission called on COAG to prioritise improving the mental wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by including mental health as an additional target in the ‘Closing the Gap’ program.

This reinforced the recommendation made by the Commission in last year’s Report Card; for targets to be included to reduce early deaths and improve wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Chair Professor Allan Fels repeated the need for a strong commitment from COAG to ensure mental health is the urgent priority it should be.

“Mental illness is second only to cardiovascular disease as the leading driver for the observed health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It must be made a priority if we are to truly combat the vicious cycles of disadvantage that exist in too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
“This must be done through the development and implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental and Social Emotional Wellbeing Plan this year,” Prof Allan Fels said.

The announcement coincided with the release of a supplementary paper to the 2012 National Report Card feature chapter on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The paper titled; Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Families and Communities, provides detail behind the wider story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and how this impacts and influences their mental health and wellbeing.

Read the supplementary report

Visit to Cairns and Yarrabah, QLD

The recent meeting in Queensland was the Commission’s second meeting focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.

During the two day meeting the Commission travelled to the community of Yarrabah located 50km east of Cairns. Commissioners visited local services including the Gindaja Treatment and Healing Indigenous Corporation, Gurriny Yealamucka Health Service and Queensland Health Service.

At a lunch hosted by the community, Mayor Errol Neal offered his insights and recommendations on what was most important for the Commissioners to take away from their visit to Yarrabah. Mayor Neal spoke of the long history of resilience and problem solving amongst the people of Yarrabah and urged the Commissioners to ensure the voice of people in rural and remote communities, is heard and considered in the Commission’s actions in 2013.

The Commission was pleased to have several guests accompany them on the visit to Yarrabah who provided further guidance and expertise on local and national issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A warm thank you to the people of Yarrabah and to everyone who shared their experiences, insights and suggestions.

Read the communique from the meeting
Partnership with Canada

Members from leading mental health organisations and Commissions from around the world met in Sydney last month for a two day meeting hosted by the Commission.

The meeting of National and International Mental Health Commissions focused on sharing best practices and experiences, providing the represented organisations with opportunities for collaboration. A communique from the meeting is being developed and will be available soon on our website.

During the two day meeting, ex-officio Commissioner and CEO, Robyn Kruk and the Mental Health Commission of Canada President and CEO, Louise Bradley, signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to share knowledge and successful practices in mental health research.

The MOU outlines how the two Commissions will seek opportunities to work together in areas such as mental health and the workplace, international knowledge exchange and stigma, with cross-promotion of work informed by the lived experience of those experiencing mental health issues, their families and support people, and the mental health sector.

Mental Health Commission of Canada