

National Mental Health Commission Meeting 26 – 27 September 2017

COMMUNIQUE

The National Mental Health Commission held its 38th meeting on Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 September 2017 in Townsville. National Mental Health Commissioners welcomed engagement and discussion on mental health and suicide prevention, integration and psychosocial disability in Queensland. National Mental Health Commissioners valued hearing the experiences of consumers, carers and service providers at the Community Forum.

Townsville Suicide Prevention Network

Commissioners were briefed on the work being done by the Townsville Suicide Prevention Network. Their work builds on the findings of a report on suicide in the local community which identified the main issue as the transient population in the region and the lack of connectedness to the community. Linking with people with lived experience has become a focus and providing training, such as through the Roses in the Ocean program, has been funded by the Network. The priorities for their work are to engage with their local community, link with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, progress work in after care, crisis care and postvention and work with the ex-ADF personnel living in Townsville. Resilience training across the community is being implemented by workplaces and other agencies and is important to support communities.

Townsville Private Clinic

Commissioners were briefed on the services provided by Townsville Private Clinic which is a private hospital and day clinic with a focus on mental health services. The services operate for across the region. The highest number of patients is from the ADF for inpatient and day patient programs, especially the Trauma Recovery program. The Commissioners were briefed on the financial difficulties often experienced by patients due to exclusions or levels of private health insurance.

Community Forum

Commissioners attended a forum with consumers and carers, service providers and community mental health organisations where issues, challenges and successes were discussed. Concerns were raised about the barriers in accessing services within the health system and the interface with the NDIS. Commissioners heard that one of the major challenges for community services is the uncertainty of funding and the lack of longer term funding models. Concerns were raised about the availability of staff to work in the mental health system and the need for assistance with recruitment, retention and incentives to attract mental health professionals. The challenges of PTSD and psychosocial disability were

raised especially in the Townsville community with high numbers of ADF and ex-ADF personnel. Commissioners were advised that there has been an increase in collaboration of agencies working in psychosocial disability.

Mayor of the City of Townsville

Commissioners were briefed on the work in Townsville to become a Mentally Healthy City which involves a coordinated approach, supported by research, for a comprehensive mental health model that includes prevention and mental health services. The Commissioners heard that the issues of PTSD for ADF personnel and first responders and the high suicide rates, especially with youth and young men, are important issues to address across the community. Concerns were raised about high youth unemployment and the need to address this along with programs to support young men who leave the ADF. The Commissioners heard that there is a lack of integration of services which creates more challenges for the community.

Townsville Health and Hospital Service

Commissioners were briefed about the mental health services provided across the region. Of particular interest were the services provided by Indigenous health workers who are part of each mental health service. The indigenous health workers undertake a cultural assessment as part of the admission processes and use a tool that was developed in Townsville that has now been rolled out across Queensland. The indigenous health workers are also part of the co-located service with the AMS. Cultural healers also operate within the service. Commissioners heard about the services provided to adults and young people. The CAMHS operates in a co-located service with Headspace which has improved connectivity between services. Within the adult service there have been improvements to the admission and discharge processes through the development of a care review process which is consumer-led. The particular challenges for the LHN include medical coverage, coordination of safe transport, building confidence among staff in the Emergency Department, interface with the PHN, enhancing consumer and carer roles and the impact of homelessness.

selectAbility

Commissioners were briefed on the work of selectAbility, a community based service with a number of specific programs. Commissioners heard about the business model operating to ensure the viability of the breadth of services, especially within the evolving NDIS environment. Concerns were raised regarding the funding for core services through the NDIS and that the funding does not cover the costs of providing the services. Commissioners heard about the services provided from JobTrain where training for the Townsville population as well as care workers, staff and mental health clients can receive training. The organisation operates as the hub for a number of other services such as the veteran suicide prevention committee and the Townsville Suicide Prevention Network. A major issue identified by the organisation was the availability of a building to be used for the 'veteran's hub' which is planned.