



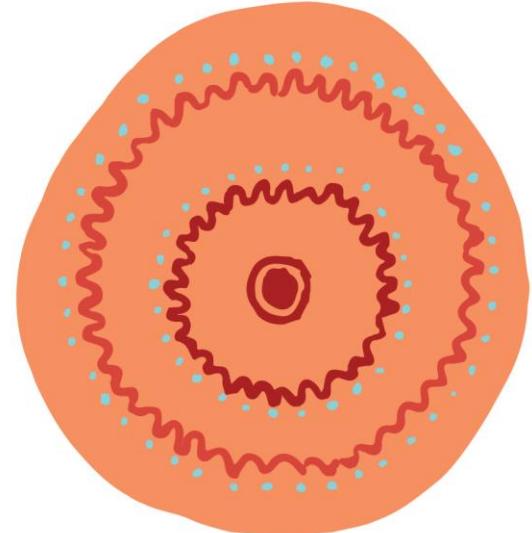
Australian Government

National Mental Health Commission

Townsville, QLD

12 August 2019

Making
Connections
with your
Mental Health
and Wellbeing



27 Participants

This snapshot identifies key points from the
Town Hall Meeting

Content from all Town Hall Meetings is being
collated by the Commission

Exploring Mental Health



Participants were asked to share
3 words that come to mind when thinking of
mental health:

- Wellbeing and walking (the connection between mental and physical health) were very common responses
 - Depression, suicide, crisis and anxiety were mentioned frequently
 - Community, support and healthy cities were also mentioned a number of times

Help Seeking

Participants were asked what stops them or someone they know from seeking help.

Direct comments included:

- 'Fear of rejection and shame that you are failing somehow'
- 'Don't know where to go to get help, not sure of the system'
- 'Not recognising the symptoms of having a problem'
- 'Professionals who believe that because they have a Degree it means that they can help people with certain life events (eg: suicide bereavement) that they don't understand and that require specialised support'
- 'Fear of involuntary treatment, loss of autonomy and people thinking that they will be admitted to a mental health asylum'
- 'Spiralling of interventions by healthcare professionals'
- 'Cost and time to get assistance'
- "It all boils down to trust. If they don't have anyone to trust, white or black, they won't talk"
- 'We are taught to eat well, exercise and take care of our physical health. But we aren't taught how to look after our mental health'

Help Seeking

Participants were asked what stops them or someone they know from seeking help.

Discussion points included:

- Not seeing any of the indicators or warning signs of potential suicide in friends and community members, not knowing what to look for or what was missed
- Community attitudes of 'just get over it', that reflect the lack of understanding that a person is in no state to act
- Denial and other responses that keep people who could help at bay
- Feelings of hopelessness, despair and frustration for sections of our community, which lead to negative mental health and tragically, to suicide
- Previous poor experience with public counselling services which were neither affirming nor empathetic
- Privacy considerations which restrict information about generational and cultural factors of a parent's mental health treatment that are critical to understanding and responding to mental health issues that the children are facing
- Lack of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people

Big Ideas or Initiatives

Participants were asked for one big idea or initiative to improve mental health in their community.

Direct comments expanded during discussion included:

- 'National Mental Health and Wellness Continuum – one common language, one wellbeing framework that articulates all policy, with a wellbeing outcome or measure. 'Slip Slop Slap' changed a nation ...'
- 'New socially acceptable norm that "it takes a village to raise a child ... it takes a village to prevent suicide and to be connected and mentally healthy"'
- 'More collaboration between services, stop reinventing the wheel and start turning the world'
- 'Designing cities with physical and mental health in mind'
- 'Stronger communities through more events that foster community spirit to combat growing social isolation'
- 'Conversation benches'
- 'Adopt a grandparent, adopt a young family, neighbourhood connections, support and friendship groups, neighbour meet and greets, know your neighbour campaign, craft groups in your suburb, enclosed dog parks, young Mum's and Bubs groups at community centres'
- 'Recognise the value of living experience in the workforce. We aren't being recognised because we don't have a PhD in psychology, we have a PhD in life experience'

Big Ideas or Initiatives

Participants were asked for one big idea or initiative to improve mental health in their community.

Discussion points included:

- Limit the 'develop at all costs' approach, that encourages unsustainable lifestyles and environments and contributes to increasing alienation, crime and breakdown of communities
- When there are no footpaths, it is so much harder for people to live in their environment and get to know their neighbours
- Pop-up hubs and community events were a great response by the Council to increase community connection after the flood disaster, the challenge now is for the community to continue and normalise these activities
- Put significant effort into creating ways for people to talk to each other, break down the isolation and build social connections
- Build recognition that people are being overloaded by social media and technology can shut us off from the person standing next to us
- Programs and organisations with shared KPIs that are centred on organisational collaboration
- Stop calling it mental health – 'it was never my mental health, it was just my wellness and I needed to realign my thinking'
- Suicide Prevention Foundation 'Drop-In Centre and Cultural Hub – a space run by Indigenous people which has programs, 24/7 line and services that are culturally appropriate

The Developing Vision

Participants were asked for key aspects to be included in the vision of a new system.

Responses included:

- Hope
- Resilience
- Human connection
- Responsibility
- Purpose
- Neighbour support
- Evolving, more fluid, growing to meet the needs of the community
- Support in times of transition
- A 'well workplace' rather than a supportive workforce
- Responsive and empathetic agencies

Thank You, Townsville

The Commission thanks the community for their comments and suggestions on improving our mental health system

Ways to stay connected:

- ✓ Attend a Town Hall meeting
- Read the snapshots from your community and other communities in Australia
- Take the survey online (on our website)
- Follow us on Facebook (@NMHCAustralia) and Twitter (@NMHC)
- Join the conversation online using #ConnectingWithYou

