



National Mental Health Commission Meeting

11 – 12 April 2018

COMMUNIQUE

The National Mental Health Commission held a meeting on Wednesday 11 and Thursday 12 April 2018 in Launceston, Tasmania. National Mental Health Commissioners welcomed engagement and discussion on mental health and suicide prevention, with a focus on children and youth, education and emergency responders in Tasmania. National Mental Health Commissioners valued hearing the experiences of consumers, carers and service providers at the Community Forum.

Primary Health Network Tasmania

Commissioners were briefed on the work of Primary Health Network Tasmania, in particular the development of a single regional plan, the health care homes trial and the suicide prevention trial site. The single regional plan is being developed in conjunction with the Statewide Mental Health Services Tasmania (the LHN) and the Department of Health and Human Services. The plan considers the joint commissioning of services, funding arrangements and the stepped care model. The health care homes trial commenced in Tasmania in December 2017. The model, which aims at increasing health outcomes, patient and provider experience and efficiency, involves general practices acting as a 'home base' to coordinate comprehensive care for people with chronic and complex conditions. The suicide prevention trial is being focussed on population groups and locations where the data supports the need for more action which is not being met through other strategies. The population groups being specifically targeted are men between the ages of 40 and 64 years and men and women over 65 years, and the locations include Launceston, the north-east coast and the central coast in the north-west. Resources are being provided to the communities for coordinated responses and have been used for local education activities including suicide prevention training.

Flourish Inc.

Commissioners were briefed on the work of Flourish Inc., an independent Tasmanian not-for-profit organisation providing a voice for mental health consumers. Flourish has a small staff and relies on the assistance of volunteers to assist with its work. The concerns of consumers include the rollout of the National Disability Scheme and ongoing services for those who do not qualify, and waiting times in emergency departments. Flourish Inc. participates in many local and statewide committees and is rolling out training to ensure consumers are prepared for their representative roles.

Department of Health and Human Services

Commissioners were briefed on the reforms which will be implemented as part of the recent election commitments, including the establishment of new specialist mental health beds,

development of a peer workforce strategy, suicide prevention services and assisted housing programs. The Commissioners were also briefed on the review of the Government's 10-year mental health plan to ensure synergy with the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan. The Commissioners heard of some of the challenges including workforce issues and delivery of specialist mental health services.

Statewide Mental Health Services Tasmania

Commissioners were briefed on the activities of Statewide Mental Health Services Tasmania, which is the single Local Health Network within Tasmania. One of the challenges for the service is to provide equity of access to services across a geographically diverse state, especially for specialist services such as older people, child and adolescent, forensic and eating disorders. To address the challenges, the service has been developing a statewide structure, establishing partnerships, exploring implementation of trauma services, enhancing workforce and developing a clinical governance framework. The Commissioners heard that issues related to information technology and elements of the Privacy Act currently preclude expansion of telehealth and e-health opportunities.

Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department

Commissioners were briefed about the challenges in meeting the needs of mental health clients presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) in Launceston. Commissioners heard that while the number of patients has not increased, the acuity and complexity of mental health patients has increased and there are several challenges for ED staff and patients. There is limited access to inpatient beds for adolescent patients and delays in accessing inpatient beds. Commissioners heard that there is no psychiatric emergency nurse available within the ED to assist with care planning, the Mental Health Act is not ED-focused, and the environment in the ED is not therapeutic.

Police and Ambulance

Commissioners were briefed by representatives of the Tasmanian Ambulance and Police. Commissioners heard that the main responsibility for these services is to protect the safety of individuals and the community. The Ambulance Service is increasingly working to support the broad health needs of the community and will liaise with support people and health professionals when assisting someone with mental health issues. Commissioners heard that both services have identified an increase in the number of callouts for people with increased anxiety, mental health issues and/or drug and alcohol problems. While there are quarterly meetings between Police, Ambulance and the mental health service, Commissioners heard that currently there is little opportunity for a mental health crisis team to attend onsite with Police and/or Ambulance, and that there is little information sharing about known clients.

Mental Health Council of Tasmania

Commissioners were briefed on the work of the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (the Council). The organisation acknowledges the commitment across the state to integrated, innovative services delivering shared outcomes for individuals. However, currently there are challenges in access and equity across the state and in workforce numbers, especially in

community services. The Commissioners heard that there is a commitment to develop a peer workforce strategy and that peer workers are only currently employed within public mental health services.

Education

Commissioners were briefed by two secondary school principals about their challenges assisting children with a mental health problem and the services that are provided within the school environment. The Commissioners heard that there are several support staff available within the school environment but that the demand for services has grown and currently outstrips the level of available resources. The Commissioners heard that care in the community is not always planned and coordinated and that having multiple sources of funding to address an individual student's mental health and social care needs does not assist with achieving coordinated care. Commissioners heard that schools often take the lead in coordinating and providing services as there is difficulty in accessing private services within the community, especially with long waiting lists. The principals identified that the mental health of their staff and their students are high on the list of priorities for all schools.

Community Response to Eliminating Suicide (CORES)

Commissioners were briefed on the work of Community Response to Eliminating Suicide (CORES), which is a non-government organisation, predominantly undertaking suicide prevention training within communities and companies. Commissioners heard that local networks are established to support communities and peer support training and resources are made available to communities. Commissioners also noted that there is increasing competition for funding amongst community groups such as CORES.

Community Forum

Commissioners attended a forum with consumers and carers, service providers and community mental health organisations where local issues, challenges and successes were discussed. Concerns were raised about lack of coordinated care across health and community services especially to address the health needs of people at all ages. The inconsistent access to services within rural areas was identified as a problem, especially with high staff turnover within health and community services. Other challenges included waiting times in the emergency departments, access to community services and timely support for young people. Support to individuals and families by consumer-focussed organisations was identified as a positive support for people with lived experience of mental illness.

National Consumer Peak Organisation

Commissioners discussed Community Mental Health Australia's call for the establishment of a national mental health consumer peak organisation. The Commission supports the establishment of a national organisation which would provide a united voice for mental health consumers.