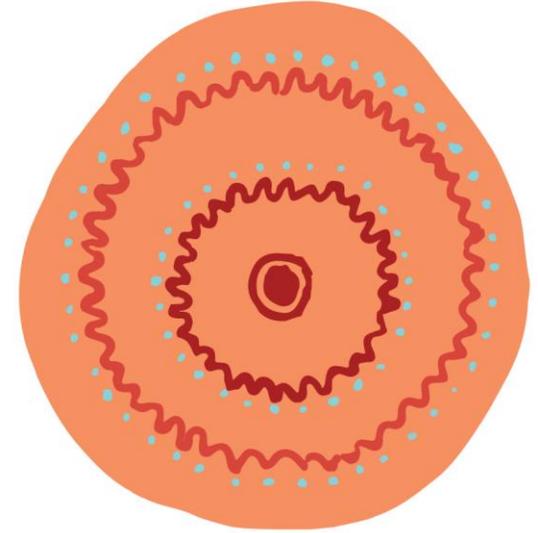




Australian Government

National Mental Health Commission

**Making
Connections
with your
Mental Health
and Wellbeing**



Bathurst, NSW

08 August 2019

63 Participants

This snapshot identifies key points from the
Town Hall Meeting

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

Help Seeking

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

Direct comments included:

- 'Not feeling like what I am going through is valid or worth talking about'
- 'Scared of others' opinions and fear of judgement'
- 'Don't want to be seen as weak, stigma'
- 'If the system has failed you once, you won't try again'
- '10 weeks to get a private psychiatrist or psychologist appointment is common'
- 'Cost, particularly for newly arrived migrants'
- 'Poor match with a psychologist or counsellor, you seem to get one chance, then they don't try again'
- 'Lack of understanding and education about help seeking and the services providing help'
- 'Often, mental unwellness leads to violence and prevents access to services'

Help Seeking

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

Discussion comments included:

- In a country community where everyone knows each other, there is a fear that word will get out that a person has mental health issues
- Language and communication problems people who are hearing impaired, or people with intellectual impairment – no interpreters or specific group support structures
- When a loved one is involuntarily admitted, the expectation is that help will happen and people will work together but it is clear that the help is not there and the person gets discharged off into the ether; overwhelming, disappointing
- Staff are overwhelmed and sometimes empathy is diminished under the constant pressure
- From an Aboriginal perspective, some issues are cultural, ie: the little voices heard are, in our beliefs the voices of our spirits and ancestors, but today we can't talk about this
- Mixing people suffering ice withdrawal with others experiencing mental illness creates a traumatising environment and experience
- Confusion and lack of understanding about what a mental health problem might be, especially around young children and the behaviours they are exhibiting
- Being very unwell and having no-one to support or advocate on your behalf

Big Ideas or Initiatives

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

Direct comments included:

- 'Building and enhancing resilience at a whole of population level – strengthening communities to recognise and respond appropriately to a person in distress and ensure that they can access the services needed; adequate funding to achieve this; free mental health'
- 'All the factors that we know promote wellbeing and protect against mental illness must underpin how our communities and society are shaped. Connection, purpose, meaning, being heard, being valued'
- 'Let's stop medicalising difficulties that are often social and trauma based'
- 'Support people with brain injury and mental health with everyday tasks and with education'
- 'Change the funding models to ensure that they require a joined up service response – no more stand alone funding agreements for mental health services'
- 'A joined up system – beyond slightly more integrated, to truly connected and easy to access the right service at the right time'
- 'Cut the need for GP referrals and make it easier for clients to access ATAPS. Provide training so that frontline agencies and NGOs can refer directly to mental health professionals with ATAPS subsidy'
- 'Why not develop a self-assessment check in, similar to breast cancer checks once a month? Simple, advertised, builds literacy, breaks stigma.' #winning'

Big Ideas or Initiatives

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

Discussion points included:

- A percentage of funding quarantined for innovative, locally driven programs
- Build aged care homes and early childhood centres on the same location
- Continue to work to bring psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia into the reframed mental health spectrum that currently focuses on anxiety and depression
- More emphasis on arts, street theatre, story, etc to establish connections with young people who are feeling alienated by mental health issues
- More follow-up and oversight on prescribed medications and their side-effects
- Utilise the earlier Chinese notion of the Barefoot Doctor as applied to psychiatrists and other professionals, who don't pay HECS in return for 1 - 2 years service in country areas
- Change the language to 'mind health' not 'mental' and educate from early childhood on how to look after and nurture mind health

The Developing Vision

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

Responses included:

- Ownership
- Recovery
- Accountability
- Relationships
- Empathy
- Respect
- Choices
- Kindness
- Responding to vulnerability – engaging not controlling
- Cooperation not coercion

Thank You, Bathurst

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

