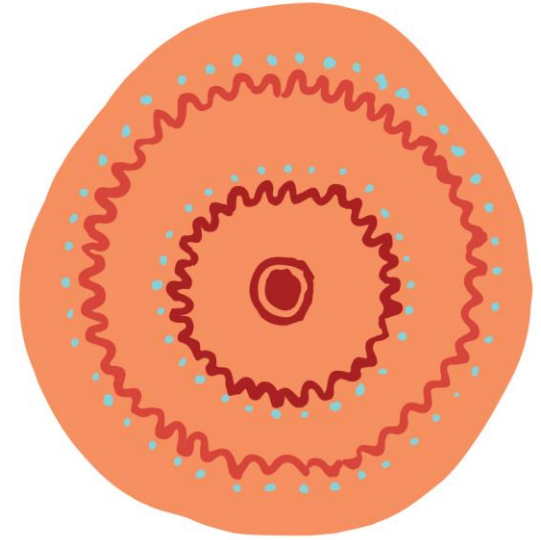




Australian Government

National Mental Health Commission

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



Albury Wodonga, NSW/VIC

30 August 2019

35 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:

- 'In small communities, everyone knows everyone and I don't want anyone to know I have "issues"'
- 'Difficult to find a GP who is trained or competent in mental health'
- 'Mental health workers and Police won't trust parents and loved ones'
- 'People don't realise how urgent it is when I seek help – I only seek help when I'm absolutely on the cusp of desperation'
- 'Access line is inaccessible line'
- 'My physical health has gone down the tubes since I've been "overdosed" on medications and no one seems interested – we die much earlier than anyone else due to this'
- '50% of people with schizophrenia don't believe they are unwell'
- 'I'm not allowed to be normal any more, with normal hopes and dreams'

Help Seeking

Direct comments included – continued:

- 'Stigma, judgement, discrimination and societal prejudice'
- 'There is no help with dual-diagnosis. Mental Health won't help someone taking drugs/alcohol. Drug and Alcohol services won't help someone with untreated mental health problems'
- 'Don't know where to go to get help without judgement from a qualified person, where I would be safe from myself and others'
- 'Often no parental support for young people'
- 'The cross border health service is so frustrating!!'
- '8.30 am – 5.00 pm services only, combined with the stigma of health staff in ED'
- 'Not having culturally appropriate or safe services'
- 'Lack of pathways for non mental health services to follow or navigate'
- 'My issue is not their priority'

Help Seeking

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

Discussion points included:

- The Mental Health Act is written from the basis of physical unwellness; at your most unwell mentally, you can't make your own rational decisions
- Rehabilitation not jail, is what will help for drug use but there is a two year waiting list for rehabilitation beds
- Lack of transitional programs to support people after treatment so that the same traumatising pattern is not repeated all over again
- A lack of services where there is a real person who can look at the person and understand where they are at, rather than being pushed off to a phone line
- The complex role of immediate family members where their input may be negative to the person and the situation
- Having to rely on personal contacts and help that comes from outside of the system through connections, to make any progress

Big Ideas or Initiatives

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

Direct comments included:

- 'Public reporting of mental health outcomes'
- 'Create Mental Health Emergency Departments, with highly trained mental health staff'
- 'GROW mental health groups or other peer support groups such as the Clubhouse model in every country town in Australia'
- 'More supported respite and rehab communities that provide group work and skills training then link individuals into ongoing local supports before they return home. Housing kept secure for the duration. Local day program equivalents in all major towns'
- 'Fast track new innovations in treating depression such as Ketamine and make it affordable'
- 'A 24/48 hour safe house or space to talk to peers, with professionals to help head off the crisis and settle back down. Then get any further help if needed'
- 'Amend the Mental Health Acts to make them the same in every State'
- 'Kindness from well trained staff'

Big Ideas or Initiatives

Direct comments included – continued:

- 'I know this sounds futuristic but what about a Warrior Watch. A watch you wear that measures key biometric indicators that automatically alerts several services that the wearer is having an episode or needs immediate intervention'
- 'Services going to people – not the other way around'
- 'More social enterprises providing meaningful employment in a safe, understanding context – like Mad Cap Café in Dandenong, and a mental health equivalent of the Peppergreen Farm in Bendigo'
- 'Housing saves lives – social housing that is affordable and sustainable'
- 'Early intervention and education around meditation ... mandatory in schools as well as fair dinkum anti bullying strategies and policies'
- 'Mobile crisis team, who see people in their homes'
- 'Medical facility exchange program, eg: in Albury over Xmas get told there's no mental health beds, but the private hospital closes for 2 weeks over Xmas – can't mental health facilities needing more beds, use empty beds in closed wards and hospitals?'
- 'Safe houses so carers can have respite'

Big Ideas or Initiatives

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

Discussion points included:

- Use technology to create a Warrior Watch that is worn to measure key biometric indicators that automatically alerts selected services that the wearer needs immediate intervention as an episode comes on
- Like the Regional Cancer Centre in Albury Wodonga, create a significant one stop building that provides all the mental health services in one place
- Bring lived experience people into the workforce, to be partnered with a clinician at every level of the mental health services, both public and private
- Learn from the Mind organisation in the UK (mind.org.uk) in terms of Crisis Cafés that provide a temporary, short term stay, co-funded by the charities and the Government, as an alternative to inpatient admission
- Establish a State Mental Health Commission in Victoria to shine a spotlight on key issues
- Mental Care Nurses in the same way that Breast Care Nurses have been established
- Increase research to build improvement into service delivery
- Educate on the links between diet, nutrition and mental wellness

The Developing Vision

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

Responses included:

- Recovery oriented practice
- Intergenerational
- Peer support
- Celebration of diversity
- All of me, physical, mental and social
- Emotional challenges – I am not diseased, not ill and not infectious
- Creative, unique and self-expressing
- Legacy – a community of care when a carer is no longer there
- Reconnecting with nature, the arts and music

Thank You, Albury Wodonga

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

www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au

