



Australian Government
Department of Health

Primary Health Network Advisory Panel Communique

The Primary Health Networks Mental Health Advisory Panel met for the first time in Melbourne on Friday 23th June.

Background

In December 2015, the Australian Government announced a package of mental health reforms in response to the National Mental Health Commission's *Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities: A Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services*. The reforms outlined a new architecture for service delivery that utilises the 31 Primary Health Networks that commenced in July 2015 as a cornerstone for regional mental health planning and integration. The Primary Health Networks understand that the clear intent of the reforms is to deliver better services and improved outcomes for people with lived experience of mental health issues and have been working hard in partnership with key stakeholders towards achieving that goal. It is important to acknowledge however that the reform efforts extend beyond the Primary Health Networks, and that achieving the priorities outlined by the Australian Government will require changes across the sector, including from public, private and community sector organisations. It is only by working together that the goal of high quality and timely services delivered efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of mental health consumers and carers will be realised.

Lived experience

The Australian Government, consumers and carers, the mental health service providers and Primary Health Networks are committed to change – real and meaningful change – in the delivery of mental health and suicide prevention; improving the system for the benefit of all Australians and focusing on driving and improving outcomes that deliver benefits to people, families and communities.

At the heart of the mental health reform agenda is the active involvement of people with lived experience, their families and other support people. Involving people with lived experience who 'know what it is like', in the decision making, policy development and in shaping, implementing and evaluating reform efforts is integral to success. When we involve people with lived experience – we get better outcomes.

The first panel meeting respected the primacy of lived experience.

Issues considered at the first meeting

The first meeting considered and confirmed the proposed work-plan and activities contained in the Terms of Reference approved by Minister Hunt (a full copy is available [here](#)).

The meeting confirmed the importance of placing people with lived experience at the centre of mental health reforms and was pleased to note the strong representation on the Panel of lived experience members who along with the other members comprise a diverse group of individuals who will work collectively to consider the progress of reform to date as well as current challenges,



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and to make recommendations to the Minister regarding the opportunities to maximise outcomes for mental health consumers and carers.

The meeting confirmed the central role of Primary Health Networks in progressing reform, and in commissioning mental health programs and services that are responsive to local needs and circumstances.

The meeting spent considerable time addressing issues regarding the potential conflicts of interest that could arise in its deliberations and resolved the following:

- to maintain an active register of all the relevant interests of Panel members
- to actively consider and document any potential or actual conflicts that may arise in the course of the Panel's deliberations
- to establish and maintain a web site and to make available wherever possible the various papers and documents associated with the Panel's deliberations
- to develop and execute a communications strategy (commencing with this communique) in order to report the progress of deliberations.

Next Steps

The Panel has begun its preparations for a broader forum to engage with consumers and carers, Primary Health Networks, and other mental health experts on 22 September 2017.

The forum will inform the development of a Framework for mental health commissioning, which outlines the key principles underpinning service development as well as the service components that can reasonably be expected to be delivered across the agreed priority areas over the next five years, while still allowing for commissioning to be tailored to meet local needs. The framework will be used as the reference point to inform where reforms commissioned by the Primary Health Networks are currently at and what is required to further support reform over the next five years.

The Panel agreed to meet again on 1 December 2017.

Further information regarding the Primary Health Network Advisory Panel's purpose is available on the [Primary Health Network Advisory Panel on Mental Health webpage](#) or by emailing the [Mental Health Liaison section](#)



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Terms of Reference (extract)

The Primary Health Network Advisory Panel on Mental Health is an independent panel that brings together [16 members](#), appointed by Minister for Health, the Hon. Greg Hunt MP, to:

- 1 consider and provide advice regarding the guidelines for mental health commissioning issued to the 31 PHNs and oversee the development of a Framework for Primary Health Network mental health commissioning, noting that commissioning is a cyclical process of local consultation, local design and local solutions.
- 2 oversee an analysis of the 2016/17 Department of Health – approved needs assessments and mental health plans developed by the 31 PHNs.
- 3 Following the analysis, provide advice to the Minister for Health on strategies to support the 31 PHNs to efficiently and effectively carry out their commissioning responsibilities in mental health.
- 4 provide recommendations to the Minister for Health about the optimal system architecture and arrangements for supporting the role PHNs in ongoing mental health reform.
- 5 provide guidance for peak bodies and Colleges on how their members can engage with the PHN commissioning process.

Membership of the PHN Mental Health Advisory Panel

- Frank Quinlan, Mental Health Australia (co-Chair)
- Peggy Brown, National Mental Health Commission (co-Chair)
- Vahid Saberi, North coast NSW Primary Health Network
- Learne Durrington, WA Primary Health Alliance
- Abbe Anderson, Brisbane North Primary Health Network
- Amanda Bresnan, Community Mental Health Australia
- Lyn Littlefield, Australian Psychological Society
- Kim Ryan, Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
- Kym Jenkins, Royal Australia and New Zealand Colleges of Psychiatrists
- Pat McGorry, National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health
- Jackie Crowe, National Mental Health Commissioner
- Lucy Brogden, National Mental Health Commissioner
- Morton Rawlin, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Mark Wenitong, Indigenous and Remote Mental Health
- Samuel Hockey, Lived experience Youth Mental Health
- Lyn English, Co-Chair National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum