

RECEIVED
28 OCT 2014

24 October 2014

Mr Frank Quinlan
CEO
Mental Health Australia
PO Box 174
Deakin West ACT 2600

Dear Frank

Re: The future of the Personal Helpers and Mentors program (PHaMs)

As PHaMs providers in Queensland we are wanting to bring to your attention our concerns about the threats to the continuity of service for people currently involved in PHaMs as well as the potential consequences for people who will be unable to access PHaMs in the future. The current policy context, the short term funding arrangements for PHaMs, a national mental health review and the lack of information about the introduction of the NDIS are causing considerable uncertainty and risk.

The scope, type and delivery methodology approach of PHaMS services are critical to the recovery journey of many thousands of Australians each year. These services are well established, available in a diversity of locations, delivered by a diversity of providers that provide choice for consumers. These services are cost effective. For many people this is seen as a short term intervention service. There is strong and consistent evidence that PHaMS contributes significantly to a person's capacity to maintain a tenancy, gain or maintain employment, return to education and/or volunteering and provides links to positive outcomes such as family reunion, social inclusion and medication management. People are able to access PHaMS for what they need and then move on (an important recovery strategy and a significant early intervention/prevention initiative).

Our understanding is that 100% of PHaMS will be transferred into NDIS for Tier 3 and that as few as 20% of PHaMS participants would be eligible for Tier 3. If the majority of PHaMS clients are not eligible for Tier 3 and if Tier 2 services do not provide contemporary early intervention programs the risks are that consumers will become increasingly unwell and the demand for hospital based services will become the only alternative. At the same time the numbers of people applying and eligible for Tier 3 will increase. In addition there will be added pressure on the justice system, increased rates of homelessness and a growing demand on drug and alcohol services. This of course creates a system that, rather than provide a net benefit to Australians, becomes increasingly ever more expensive.



We believe that at a minimum block funding for PHaMs must continue during the NDIS transition period whilst the implications for transition are better understood. During this period an evaluation should be undertaken to determine the numbers of people currently accessing PHaMS and who are not deemed eligible for Tier 3. As a matter of priority the NDIA needs to demonstrate its understanding of the implications of any changes in PHaMS service availability and respond accordingly in defining the scope of Tier 2 services.

Yours sincerely

Richard Nelson
CEO
QAMH

and on behalf of:

Ivan Frkovic
National Operations Manager
Aftercare

Kris Sargeant
CEO
Open Minds

Tanya Miller
State Manager
Neami National Darra

Karen Dare
General Manager
Communify Qld

