

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mental health policy and forward planning

Chapter 2

Recommendation 1

2.53 The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with state and territory governments and mental health stakeholders, develop a new national mental health policy document to succeed the National Mental Health Plan 2003–2008. The policy document should provide a clear vision of the services required in a community-based, recovery-focussed mental health system in Australia to 2015, including, but not limited to, mental health promotion and mental illness prevention and early intervention services, community-based clinical and psychosocial services, step-up and step-down transition services, crisis and acute services, as well as accommodation, education, training, employment and other community support services for people with mental illness. The policy document should include service, funding and consumer outcome benchmarks in each of these identified areas.

Recommendation 2

2.55 The committee recommends that the National Advisory Council on Mental Health be funded to establish standing committees in each of the following areas:

- monitoring human rights abuses and discrimination against people with mental illness;
- advancing community awareness of mental illness and destigmatisation;
- monitoring service adequacy and progress towards an effective community-based, recovery-focussed system of mental health care.

The committee recommends that each standing committee report directly to the National Advisory Council. In addition, the committee recommends that the National Advisory Council table the reports of the three standing committees in Parliament on an annual basis.

Enhancing and developing the COAG Action Plan on Mental Health

Chapter 3

Recommendation 3

3.17 The committee recommends that each state and territory COAG Mental Health Group include consumer, carer, non-government organisation and private sector representatives within its membership. The committee further recommends that each COAG Mental Health Group make publicly available a quarterly

progress report outlining the work undertaken in the state or territory against each commitment in the *National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006–2011*.

Recommendation 4

3.57 The committee recommends that FaHCSIA track unspent funding under National Action Plan community initiatives rolled out through NGOs. The committee recommends that any underspent funds in sites selected for National Action Plan programs be quarantined for use in those areas and distributed through other mental health programs or direct purchase of services from public health or other providers.

Recommendation 5

3.76 The committee recommends that COAG review the progress of the Care Coordination initiative in each state and territory prior to the completion of the *National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006–2011*, including an assessment as to whether allocated funding is needed to enable the aims of the initiative to be achieved.

Recommendation 6

3.77 The committee recommends that each state and territory government include in its reports to COAG the number of people in the Care Coordination target group that have actually been offered a clinical coordinator and community coordinator.

Chapter 4

Recommendation 7

4.46 The committee recommends that in purchasing non-government organisation services for future mental health initiatives, Australian, state and territory government departments do not rely exclusively on open tenders but also develop other procurement models such as collaborative and select tenders.

Recommendation 8

4.47 The committee recommends that the following issues be considered in future funding rounds:

- the weighting given to local knowledge and linkages when assessing tenders;
- opportunities to increase collaboration;
- reducing the information burden associated with tendering for multiple programs; and
- addressing sustainability of services.

Chapter 5

Recommendation 9

5.29 The committee recommends that the Government give high priority to expanding the coverage and location of Personal Helpers and Mentors services across areas of unmet need in Australia.

Recommendation 10

5.45 The committee recommends that the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the Mental Health Council of Australia and consumer representatives be funded to work together to develop a consumer-run training package for mental health workers focussed on the lived experience of mental illness. The committee recommends that the training be in a modularised format so that components can be delivered within existing NGO, vocational and professional training.

Recommendation 11

5.51 The committee recommends that FaHCSIA in conjunction with selected Personal Helpers and Mentors providers as a matter of urgency develop and promote best practice methods for managing demand for the Personal Helpers and Mentors program.

Recommendation 12

5.60 The committee recommends that FaHCSIA develop and publish an evaluation framework for the Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) program. The framework should pay particular attention to who is accessing the program and to consumer outcomes. The committee further recommends that all evaluations of the program be made public. Such evaluation should not however delay the expansion and further rollout of PHaMs services.

Chapter 6

Recommendation 13

6.82 The committee recommends that the post-implementation review of the Better Access initiative gives particular attention to the referral pathways in the Better Access initiative, whether consumers are effectively moving between the providers involved and whether any structural changes or additional funding are required to improve care management and coordination.

Recommendation 14

6.104 The committee recommends that as part of the post-implementation review of Better Access a working group be established to simplify arrangements by which NGO employed psychologists and other eligible allied health professionals can use Better Access Medicare items.

6.105 The committee further recommends that the Australian Government fund a series of information workshops for relevant NGOs, explaining the outcomes of the working group and the available mechanisms for NGOs to make use of the Better Access Medicare items.

Recommendation 15

6.133 The committee recommends that the post-implementation review of the Better Access initiative consider the concerns and issues about the initiative listed in this report (paragraph 6.132). In particular, the committee considers that assessment of the outcomes for consumers using the initiative is paramount. The committee further recommends that the findings of the post-implementation review be made publicly available.

Addressing service gaps and shortfalls

Chapter 8

Recommendation 16

8.20 The committee recommends that state and territory governments substantially increase funding to establish more long-term, step-up and step-down community-based accommodation for people with mental illness that is linked with clinical and psycho-social supports and rehabilitation services.

Recommendation 17

8.62 The committee recommends that the Australian Government strengthen mental health consumer representation, through funding consumer-run organisations to provide independent advocacy at state, territory and Commonwealth levels and to provide peer support, information and training to their members.

Recommendation 18

8.73 The committee recommends that Centrelink develop Mental Health Consultative Committees, modelled on the Western Australian Centrelink Mental Health Consultative Committee, within each of the other states and territories. The committees recommends that the Centrelink Mental Health Consultative Committees include consumer and carer representatives, representatives of the state and territory community mental health peak bodies, state and territory specialist employment services, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, ACE National Network, state Centrelink offices, the relevant state government department of employment and the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Recommendation 19

8.86 The committee recommends that the Australian Government provide funding for a public awareness program focussed on psychotic illnesses, to be targeted to adolescents and young adults, their peers, parents and teachers.

Recommendation 20

8.115 The committee recommends that in negotiating the next Australian Health Care Agreement, the Australian and state and territory governments agree on mechanisms to ensure that community-based mental health services are prioritised in state mental health spending.

Recommendation 21

8.153 The committee recommends that the Australian, state and territory governments develop as a matter of priority a framework for evaluating the consumer outcomes achieved by the *National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006–2011*.

Recommendation 22

8.154 The committee recommends that the Australian, state and territory governments jointly fund and establish a Mental Health Institute to foster research as recommended by the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health and to conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of mental health services across Australia.

Recommendation 23

8.157 The committee recommends that in reviewing the *National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006–2011* and developing future mental health policy, the Australian, state and territory governments give priority to addressing the shortfalls that currently exist in community-based mental health services, housing, education and employment for people with mental illness, comorbidity services, acute care and workforce supply to the mental health sector.

Chapter 9**Recommendation 24**

9.67 The committee recommends that the National Advisory Council on Mental Health be funded to convene a taskforce on childhood sexual abuse and mental illness, to assess the public awareness, prevention and intervention initiatives needed in light of the link between childhood sexual abuse and mental illness and to guide government in the implementation of programs for adult survivors. The committee recommends that the taskforce report its findings by July 2009 and that COAG be tasked with implementing the necessary programs and reforms.

Recommendation 25

9.68 The committee recommends that the Australian, state and territory governments, through COAG, jointly fund a nation-wide Borderline Personality Disorder initiative. The committee recommends that the initiative include:

- designated Borderline Personality Disorder outpatient care units in selected trial sites in every jurisdiction, to provide assessment, therapy, teaching, research and clinical supervision;
- awareness raising programs, one to be targeted at adolescents and young adults in conjunction with the program in Recommendation 19 (Chapter 8) aimed at improving recognition of the disorder, and another to be targeted at primary health care and mental health care providers, aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours toward people with Borderline Personality Disorder; and
- a training program for mental health services and community-based organisations in the effective care of people with Borderline Personality Disorder.

The committee recommends that a taskforce including specialist clinicians, consumers, community organisations, public and private mental health services and government representatives be convened to progress and oversight the initiative.

Recommendation 26

9.102 The committee recommends that through COAG the Australian, state and territory governments coordinate and develop mental health plans and fund specific additional mental health services that address the existing shortfalls for Indigenous Australians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, youth, aged and people in rural and remote communities.