

Recommendations

- Funding to the mental health community sector is increased to allow for better care coordination across public, non-government and private health sectors
- Increased investment in early intervention services to prevent individuals from becoming socially isolated, unwell and requiring institutional care
- The National Suicide Prevention Strategy is located within a broader mental health promotion strategy which includes a social inclusion campaign

The Queensland Alliance is the peak body for the state's mental health community sector. We are a member based organisation with approximately 240 members across Queensland.

We represent the non-profit, mental health community sector, who meet the needs of people who experience mental illness including consumer groups, family and carer groups as well as community based service providers.

We promote, strengthen and develop the growth of the sector to provide community based, recovery oriented responses to the needs of people who experience mental illness.

It is our vision that all people are able to access a diverse range of services and resources to support their recovery and well being.

Queensland Alliance:

- believes in human rights and social justice
- believes in the consumer inspired recovery orientation
- believes that health is not only the absence of disease, but a state of physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing
- believes responses that are located as close as possible to a person and their community as possible will best meet their needs
- supports the participation and contribution of people with the lived experience of mental illness in the formulation of policy and design of the service system

The Role of the Mental Health Community Sector in Suicide Prevention

Suicide is an event with multiple and often complex contributing factors; one of the most common being mental illness (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2007).

The *COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006 – 2011* (2006) states that “People with mental illness often require access to a range of human services provided by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and the private and non-government sector. Better coordination of all these services can help to prevent people who are experiencing acute mental illness from slipping through the care ‘net’ and reduce their chances of readmission to hospital, homelessness, incarceration or suicide. Better coordinated services will also mean that people can better manage their own recovery.”

The treatment of mental health disorders in Queensland has been primarily provided through the public clinical mental health system, including both hospital and community-based treatment. A greater balance of investment across the spectrum of interventions is required to achieve better system community and consumer outcomes in line with the National Suicide Prevention Strategies objectives.

The mental health community sector in Queensland provides support to approximately 70,000 individuals per year and plays an important role in supporting people with mental health issues to remain in the community and develop their social networks and supports which aligns with one of the principles underpinning the LIFE Framework (Queensland Alliance, 2008).

The National Suicide Prevention Action Plan emphasises the role of coordination between government and non-government services. Care coordination models such as the one utilised by Queensland Health Service Integration Care Coordinators within the public system assist services to partner in supporting individuals reducing the likelihood individuals will “fall through the cracks” of the service system and leave them isolated and vulnerable. Funding of community mental health services must be adequate to allow the development and maintenance of those relationships integral to care coordination models. Current funding levels do not allow non government services to do this as effectively as possible.

Funding to the mental health community sector is increased to allow for better care coordination across public, non-government and private health sectors

Suicide Prevention Australia’s Policy Statement on Mental Illness and Suicide (2009) highlights the role that critical transitions from psychiatric care and other institutional environments in reducing the risk of suicide among mentally ill individuals. These transitions have begun to be addressed by the Queensland Government through the introduction of programs such as the Transitional Recovery Program and Transition from Correctional Facility Program. Queensland Alliance believes these programs must be made available to all communities. We believe that programs that prevent admissions to hospitals, such as the “Time Out Houses” youth initiative recently funded by the Queensland Treasurer should be the focus of more funding and a part of the National

Suicide Prevention Strategy. These programs can prevent individuals from becoming unwell and at risk of harm to themselves.

Increased investment in early intervention services to prevent individuals from becoming socially isolated, unwell and requiring institutional care

Mental Health Promotion and Social Inclusion

A suicide prevention strategy needs to be a part of a broader mental health promotion strategy. The suicide prevention strategy has been an important response to the issue in Australia, the weakness of the approach has been that it has not been delivered in context with a broader mental health strategy.

Discrimination is the single largest barrier to recovery identified by mental health consumers. The Mental Health Council Australia recently conducted the first national survey of mental health carers. The results site stigma, discrimination and isolation for carers and consumers as one of the main issues of concern for carers in Australia (MHCA, 2009). Only 35% of people with a mental health disorder access services in Australia (ABS 2007). Discrimination is a barrier to achieving the aims outlined in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. The 4th National Mental Health Plan & the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission Report have identified the need for social inclusion campaigns in mental health.

An example of best practice with relation to mental health promotion is the *Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland* policy and action plan. It is a strategic national commitment to promote and protect good mental health. The strategy includes raising awareness, eliminating stigma, preventing suicide and promoting recovery as its key aims.

The *VicHealth Mental Health Promotion Framework* is a local example of a strategy that acknowledges the complexity and context of mental health issues for individuals in Australia.

Queensland Alliance believes the Committee should recommend that Australia develop and deliver a comprehensive and coordinated strategy which includes suicide prevention as a central priority.

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy is located within a broader mental health promotion strategy which includes a social inclusion campaign

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