



A Mental Health Hub for Tasmania

Delivering an integrated, preventative model of mental health care

Mental Health Council of Tasmania

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Introduction

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) is a member based peak body. We represent and promote the interests of community managed mental health services and have a strong commitment to enabling better access and outcomes for every Tasmanian. Our purpose is to improve mental health for all Tasmanians, and our vision is for all Tasmanians to have awareness of, and value their mental health and wellbeing.

Background

In late 2018, MHCT consulted with the community-managed mental health sector and other stakeholders before developing a Budget Priority Submission for the Tasmanian State Government's consideration. A number of significant and very urgent concerns regarding universal and ongoing pressures and gaps that exist within Tasmania's mental health sector were identified through the process. MHCT's consultation identified the breadth of system gaps, the dysfunction of the service, increasing and unsustainable pressure on our hospital emergency departments, access problems and siloed service delivery as major concerns. These issues all directly and significantly impacting on the state's ability to deliver an integrated, consumer-focused mental health service for Tasmanians and to reach the goals set out in both the [Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan](#) and Tasmania's [Rethink Mental Health – Better Mental Health and Wellbeing 2015-2020 Plan](#).

Most importantly, there was universal acknowledgment that our mental health system is currently dysfunctional and extremely fragmented - operating in 'crisis mode', responding reactively to systemic issues and shortfalls, whilst attempting to plug gaps as they appear. There is collective acknowledgement that significant system redesign encompassing long-term vision and commitment for transformation will be required to ensure we continue to develop an integrated, innovative, early intervention/prevention model of mental health care delivery for all Tasmanians.

MHCT acknowledges that these experiences are not unique to Tasmania. Across the nation, there are reports of similar shortfalls and challenges, translating into an enormous burden on our acute mental health services. Many of these issues are acknowledged within the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

In addition, the Productivity Commission's current Inquiry into Australia's Mental Health system will identify the economic burden of mental ill health and provide a raft of recommendations. On completion, this insight into the system, the barriers and the opportunities will provide a watershed moment for Federal Government to demonstrate commitment to transforming the mental health system for all Australians.

Tasmania, due to its population size and geography, has one health service (THS), one Primary Health Network (Primary Health Tasmania, known as PHT) - providing the perfect environment to implement a truly integrated, seamless and interdisciplinary model of mental health care for our state, and better outcomes for our communities.



A Mental Health Hub for Northern Tasmania

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania believes Tasmania is uniquely placed to co-design and deliver a dedicated Mental Health Hub as a significant new investment in an integrated, seamless delivery of mental health services for all Tasmanians, with the Hub located in the North of the state.

The asset would be developed on a greenfield site in the North of Tasmania (with the exact location to be secured following consultation and scoping), and once established would offer an economical and recovery-oriented alternative to crisis care currently being delivered in our overburdened hospital emergency departments. The Hub would meet the full range of mental health care needs: dedicated sub-acute and psychosocial care (including a dedicated space to accommodate consumers who present as suicide risks) with clinical, primary and community managed care co-located within the Hub – providing a full suite of supports, referrals and services to support individuals accessing the service.

Rationale

MHCT and our stakeholders, including the community managed mental health sector and the Tasmanian Government, are all in agreement that an evolutionary shift away from crisis care and towards a preventative care model is long overdue for Tasmania.

Our state is uniquely placed, both geographically and demographically, to house and co-deliver a Mental Health Hub – the first of its kind in the Commonwealth. The Mental Health Hub will provide an unprecedented opportunity to create a State-Federal partnership to deliver an innovative mental health service, leveraging off the work undertaken by both the Commonwealth (through the PHNs and other mechanisms) and State Governments to address the urgent need to develop an interdisciplinary model of care.

Tasmania is already working towards an integrated mental health service model, with State and Federal funding support already driving transformation of the mental health system - fostering communities of practice, innovation and collaboration across the spectrum of mental health services. Tasmanian government, agencies and community managed mental health sectors already work side-by-side in a strong partnership, delivering mental health services.

The creation of a dedicated Mental Health Hub would meet the needs of our population, in particular those in the north of our state, and offer an inclusive, readily accessible and purpose-built service, delivering acute care assessment, sub-acute care and community managed mainstream supports. The Hub will reduce the pressure on our acute services, and significantly reduce unnecessary distress on Tasmanians, many of whom currently believe their only entry point to receive care when they are acutely unwell is via a hospital Emergency Department. The Hub model of care will also deliver invaluable learnings that can inform other regions around Australia who are reporting similar increasing pressure being placed on their Emergency Department's and acute mental health facilities.

An investment of this nature in an innovative, preventative model of care for Tasmanians will clearly demonstrate that a transformation towards a unified, seamless mental health service for our state and our nation is not only an aspiration, but a clear and tangible commitment from the Commonwealth Government.



World's best practice mental health care model

The unique Tasmanian circumstance (our location, relative isolation due to our geography as an island state, and our population size) closely mirrors the city of Trieste, Italy - widely acknowledged to currently have the world's best, most effective and arguably most economical mental health care system in the world.

This integrated, prevention focused model of care in Trieste was a significant policy innovation, and one that Tasmania is uniquely placed to replicate with bipartisan commitment to long term transformation.

Following Italy's mental health de-institutionalisation throughout the 1960s, a model evolved during subsequent decades and reached full maturity. The Trieste service delivery model focuses strongly on early intervention, stepped care and community-based support, and represents a shift from 'bare survival' to long-term social integration. In 2012, Trieste had a population of 235,000 and a public mental health budget of AUD 35.5 million per annum, equating to a per-capita, per-annum spend of approximately AUD 150; this is very low relative to other OECD jurisdictions worldwide. In Australia, the current cost per-capita, per-annum is AUD 358 and climbing.

Of the Trieste mental health funding in 2012:

- **6%** was spent on inpatient services
- **6%** was spent on pharmaceutical services
- **20%** was spent on individually-tailored, person-centred community and social supports such as workplace and professional training, economic subsidies, payments for group activities, trips and personalised 'health care budgets' (similar to the NDIS model).
- **68%** was spent on community-based public mental health services.

Using this system, Trieste saw the number of involuntary mental health commitments drop dramatically (to the lowest anywhere in Europe). Despite the relative lack of focus on acute care, Trieste has seen no increases in suicide rates, homelessness, or trans-institutionalisation (to jails, prisons and forensic psychiatric wards).

In addition to the low cost of the system, the Trieste model evidences significant productivity benefits:

- Successful transitioning of participants into the (unsubsidised) workforce - in 2012, 180 users received funded professional training and 23 returned to the national workforce as a result, a per-annum workforce return rate of 13% with consequent savings for the welfare system
- Initiating community social enterprises that are run entirely by participants. These are supported by government tax incentives and act to transition people from welfare dependency into meaningful, self-directed paid work.

Why Tasmania?

Tasmania's geography and population size uniquely lends itself to embark wholeheartedly on an evolutionary pathway towards a Trieste-type model focused on integrated, non-acute supports and services for our communities. Our state's existing and collective focus on integration, prevention and early intervention, as outlined in the 'Rethink Mental Health – A long-term plan for Mental Health in Tasmania 2015-2025' provides the underpinning framework to embark on this evolutionary step. The development of the Hub could harness the already strong partnerships across government (Primary Health Tasmania, Dept. of Health and other agencies) and the community managed mental health sector –



working collaboratively to design, develop and deliver a new and truly person-centred mental health care model for all Tasmanians.

Why the North of our State?

Early in 2018, the returning Tasmanian government made a series of mental health commitments, with many enhancements and new initiatives due to come online in the south of the state, given our population spread and location (predominantly in the south, and including greater Hobart). These include a new, 12 bed equivalent Mental Health Hospital in the Home service (due to commence in 2019, and servicing greater Hobart), the development of a new, 12 bed St. John's Park Mental Health Facility (online 2020, and located in New Town, Hobart), and the redevelopment of the Peacock Centre in North Hobart (online in 2020), in addition to ongoing enhancements within the Royal Hobart Hospital.

To oversee the southern initiatives, a Mental Health Integration Taskforce has been established. While tasked with a focus on the south, the Taskforce has discussed at length the broader aims and objectives for the whole population and a mental health hub model such as the one that is being proposed has received strong support and interest. The taskforce is currently in the process of considering what steps can be taken to implement an integrated, contemporary model of care in relation to the Peacock and St John's Park developments, that would contribute significantly to the establishment of a mental health hub in the north.

This focus on the south of our state, whilst welcome, highlights the need to develop a holistic service in the north to alleviate the equally urgent pressures being placed on our public mental health services in the north. The Mental Health Hub will fill this gap, providing dedicated and integrated mental health supports in the north of our state and provide a valuable opportunity to develop a state-of-the-art integrated mental health facility.



What investment is required for the Mental Health Hub?

Service

Tasmanian Mental Health Hub – situated on a greenfield site in the North of the state.

Rationale

The Fifth National Mental Health Plan's Priority 1 is a commitment to Achieving integrated regional planning and service delivery. The Mental Health Hub provides an unprecedented opportunity to 'leap frog' ahead to quickly develop and deliver a short-term reality, rather than a long-term goal - a truly interdisciplinary model of care.

Tasmania is uniquely placed, both geographically and demographically, to house and co-deliver a Mental Health Hub. Tasmania is transforming to an integrated model for the mental health service, with state and federal funding support driving transformation of the mental health system – fostering communities of practice, innovation and collaboration across the spectrum of mental health services.

Investment Required

\$20 million provided by the Commonwealth Government to the Tasmanian State Government to secure the greenfield site, design and develop the purpose-built asset.

The Tasmanian State Government will partner collaboratively with all stakeholders (Primary Health Tasmania, the Tasmanian Health Service and the community-managed mental health sector) to develop the site, manage the asset, and co-develop and deliver the Mental Health Hub service delivery model.

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