

Preamble

Mental Health has been a National Health Priority for the past two decades. Despite this, there has remained widespread public concern about the nature and pace of mental health reform, particularly in the past decade. In 2006, as a response to this concern, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a five year National Action Plan for Mental Health¹. This \$5 billion plan together with the revised National Mental Health Policy² and the release of recurring National Mental Health Plans represent the key policy and planning framework underpinning current national mental health reform.

This document outlines the activity conducted by all States and Territories prior to the release of the Fourth National Mental Health Plan³ (the Fourth Plan) and sets the baseline from which progress under the Fourth Plan can be measured. The activity described was current as at January 2010 and is structured against the actions of the Fourth Plan to assist in relating current activity to the agreed actions in the Plan. The report does not include all activity relating to mental health reform, rather it documents activities relevant to the new priorities outlined in the Fourth Plan. The Mental Health Standing Committee (MHSC) have endorsed these jurisdictional reports as a companion document to the Fourth Plan's Implementation Strategy with a view towards building on existing frameworks and structures from which new initiatives under the Fourth Plan may emerge.

Historical Policy Environment

In 1992, all Australian Health Ministers agreed to the National Mental Health Policy and the First National Mental Health Plan. Together with the National Mental Health Statement of Rights & Responsibilities, they formed the initial documents known as the National Mental Health Strategy (the Strategy). Over the past two decades, a range of other documents have been developed as components of the Strategy. These include:

- National Mental Health Policy 2008
- A series of National Mental Health Plans successive every five years (currently the Fourth Plan). The first three Plans had associated funding agreements;
- Numerous State & Territory Mental Health Plans and Frameworks.
- A number of specific National sub-plans and strategies.
- Mental Health Statement of Rights and Responsibilities⁴;
- National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010⁵;

The Strategy works within a whole of government context that incorporates commitment from across Government (Australian, State and Territory Governments) towards a unified plan for mental health service reform. The commitment further extends to include housing, employment, education and justice sectors to complement and support the impact of mental health interventions.

1 COAG (1996) *National Action Plan for Mental Health 2006-2011*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

2 Australian Health Ministers Conference (2009) *National Mental Health Policy 2008*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

3 Australian Health Ministers Conference (2009) *Fourth National Mental Health Plan – an agenda for collaborative Government action in mental health 2009-2014*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

4 Australian Health Ministers (1991) *Mental Health Statement of Rights and Responsibilities*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

5 Australian Health Ministers Conference (2010) *National Standards for Mental Health Services 2010*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Given the diversity of need across jurisdictions, the Strategy provides the broader framework of principles and agreed priorities for mental health service reform with scope for individual jurisdictions to implement activity in accordance with local priorities and systems.

Fourth National Mental Health Plan

Of particular relevance to these jurisdictional reports is the Fourth National Mental Health Plan. The Fourth Plan was endorsed by the Australian Health Ministers Conference (AHMC) on 4 September 2009 and released on 13 November 2009. The Plan includes 34 agreed actions across five priority areas:

- Social inclusion and recovery;
- Prevention and early intervention;
- Service access, coordination and continuity of care;
- Quality improvement and innovation; and
- Accountability – measuring and reporting progress.

The Plan takes a whole of government approach acknowledging that many of the determinants of good mental health and of mental illness are influenced by factors beyond the health system.

Since endorsement of the Plan in 2009, the MHSC has focused on the development of an Implementation Strategy to guide the implementation of actions in the Plan. The Implementation Strategy aims to articulate the way in which a detailed approach to implementation of each action will be developed. The MHSC has also established small working groups to develop the detailed year-by-year implementation approach for actions in the Fourth Plan and coordinate national activities relevant to each action.

To ensure strong linkages with other sectors, the Chair of AHMC invited other Ministerial Councils to participate in a Cross-Sectoral Working Group (CSWG) whose primary membership includes representatives from relevant Ministerial Councils. The role of the CSWG is to progress the whole of government aspects of the Plan and to establish ongoing relationships with other sectors to promote further adoption of mental health reform by other Ministerial Advisory Councils that were represented on the Fourth Plan Reference Group. Many actions have been highlighted by the CSWG for monitoring and for facilitating implementation in sectors beyond that of Health services.

Jurisdictional Reports

The reports contained in the following attachments reflect mental health reform activity that pre-dates the implementation of the Fourth Plan. The data was current to January 2010 for most jurisdictions, although in West Australia, it was considered necessary to provide more recent data to June 2010 to reflect significant changes that occurred independently to the Fourth Plan. The information should be considered within the following context:

- The activity reported is not a reflection of all mental health initiatives being conducted in the jurisdiction, but rather only that activity that is directly relevant to the priorities and actions contained in the Fourth Plan. Therefore, no assumptions should be made in regard to the entirety of funding, priorities or activity within each jurisdiction;

- As the information pre-dates the implementation of the Fourth Plan, the reports shall be used as a baseline to indicate the progress of initiatives under the Fourth Plan that is relevant at a jurisdictional level only.

Nationally coordinated initiatives relating to the Fourth Plan will be developed and reported to the MHSC at their October 2010 meeting.

These reports are being released as a companion document to the Fourth Plan's Implementation Strategy and together, they will form a starting structure from which future initiatives can progress.

Contact Details

For any enquiries in relation to the implementation of the Fourth National Mental Health Plan, please contact the Fourth Plan Secretariat as follows:

Fourth National Mental Health Plan Secretariat
Mental Health Policy Unit
ACT Health
Level 2, 11 Moore Street
Canberra ACT 2601

Ph: 0402 032 943
Fax: 02 6258 2943
Email: 4nmhp@act.gov.au