

# NSW Mental Health Reform 2014 – 2024

Ensuring people with mental illness can live a better life and can participate in the community is a key commitment of the NSW Government.

In 2012, the Government established the Mental Health Commission of NSW and tasked it with the role of monitoring, reviewing and improving mental health and wellbeing for the people of NSW.

Under the leadership of Commissioner John Feneley, the Mental Health Commission of NSW consulted widely to develop a strategic plan for mental health care in NSW. The Commission's ten year road map *Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024* was adopted and released by the Government in 2014.

The plan sets out actions for reform of the mental health system in NSW and calls for collaboration between the government, the non-government and private sectors to improve outcomes for those living with a mental illness.

In December 2014, the NSW Government announced its response to the Commission's *Strategic Plan - Strengthening Mental Health Care in NSW* - and committed \$115 million to commence the first stage of reform.

Key reform directions proposed by the Mental Health Commission of NSW and embraced by the Government include:



**Strengthening prevention and early intervention**, with a focus on high risk groups, such as children and young people. ([Wellbeing in Schools](#))



**Shifting the focus to community based care**, including the transition of patients in long stay psychiatric hospitals into community based residential options, supported by strengthened specialist community mental health services ([Increasing Specialist Clinical Mental Health Services in the Community](#), [Expanding Psychosocial Community Living Supports](#) and [Assisting Long Term Patients to Live in the Community](#))



**Developing a more responsive system**, through investing in improved specialist services for people with complex needs ([Strengthening Specialist Support for People with Complex Needs](#))



**Working together to deliver person-centred care**, through better integration between mental health services, mainstream health, justice and human services and Commonwealth funded services ([Local Innovation and Performance](#))



**Building a better system**, through workforce planning, development of the non-government organisation sector, an investment in peer workforce initiatives and research and innovation ([Investing in Research](#), [Investing in Workforce](#))

The implementation of these reforms is being overseen by the Mental Health Reform Taskforce, led by the Secretary of NSW Health, and comprising senior representation from Family and Community Services, Justice,

Department of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury and Education. The Taskforce has developed implementation plans in response to 141 recommendations identified in *Living Well*. Implementation is being monitored by the NSW Mental Health Commission.

## A whole of government, whole of system response to mental illness

The NSW Mental Health Commission's vision is for the people of NSW to have the best opportunity for good mental health and wellbeing and to live well in their community on their own terms.

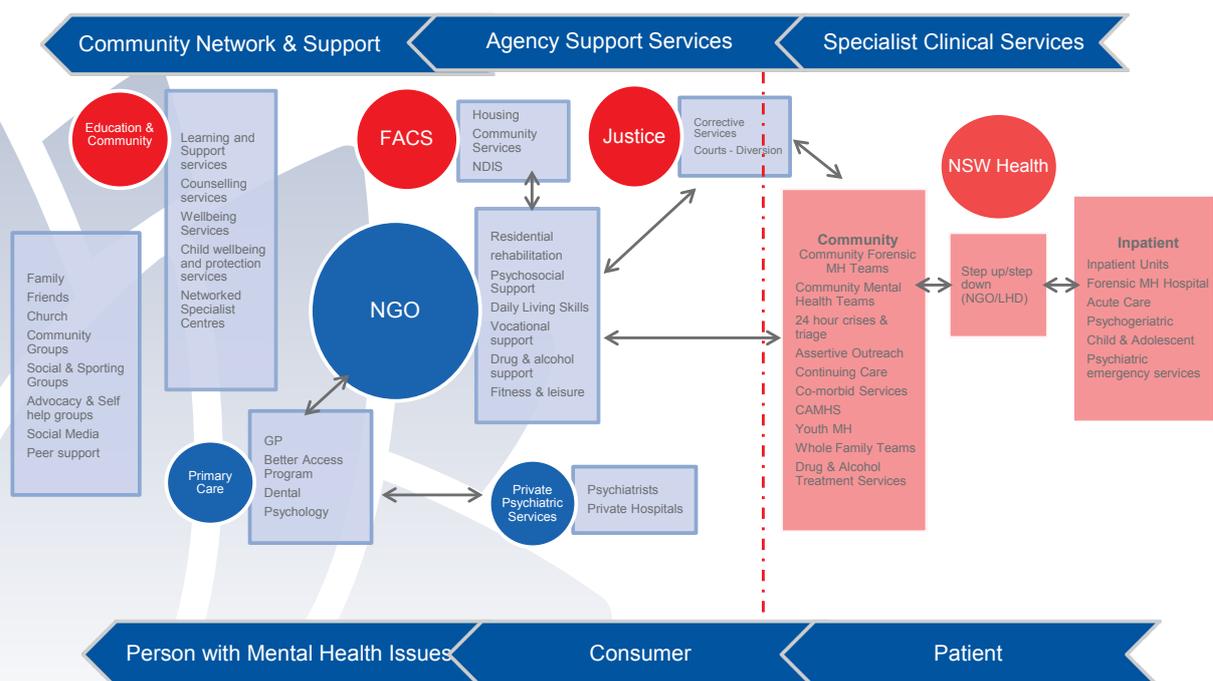
This vision is at the heart of Government reform which is about creating a balanced system of prevention and early intervention, community and hospital based treatment and rehabilitation services combined with opportunities for learning, employment, housing and social interaction, to support people living with mental illness.

In keeping with the Commission's call to action, the focus of the first step in the ten year reform journey to create a better mental health system in NSW is to shift the balance of care and provide the foundation for people with mental illness to live and be supported in the community.

## Shifting the balance of care from the hospital to the community

The Government's adoption of *Living Well* embraces a dynamic model across the continuum of care to shift the balance between hospital and community-based support to deliver responsive, person centred care for people living with a mental illness.

The key elements of the Government's response are detailed below – **specialist clinical services, community networks and supports and agency support services**. The model draws on a whole of government and whole of system



*A dynamic model across the continuum of care to shift the balance into community-based support*

response to wrap services and supports around the individual patient, when and where they need them.

### **Specialist Clinical Services – a core role of NSW Health Local Health Districts and Networks**

*NSW Mental Health Reform 2014- 2024* recognises that hospital-based mental health care is only one part of a good health system.

To help create a more balanced mental health system, NSW Health will continue to invest in the development of mental health inpatient beds in line with population need, while also investing in services that will support a shift to community care.

Key reforms being led by NSW Health include the strengthening of the specialist community mental health teams forming part of the services provided by NSW Health Local Health Districts and Specialty Health Networks. These specialist teams will provide care for a number of at risk groups, and step up and step-down care options to provide an alternative to inpatient admission or support for patients following an acute episode of illness.

The overarching aim is for Health Districts and Networks to provide back-up to community based supports provided by non-government organisations, and other government agencies. This provides the network of services and support that people with mental illness need to recover as close to home as possible and to stay healthy and out of hospital.

### **Community Networks and Supports – a core role for non-government organisations**

An effective community based system of mental health care wraps services and supports around the person living with mental illness, with the aim of helping them live well within the community.

The Government's response recognises that non-government organisations play a pivotal role as advocate and case manager in connecting people with mental illness to the whole-of-person support services they need, but may not be aware of or able to access.

With the person supported in their daily living needs, specialist community mental health teams provided by NSW Health Districts and Networks can focus on providing expert clinical care required by the person to recover in the community. These teams will also be available to support delivery of psychosocial care and daily living supports by non government organisations for people with mental illness.

### **Agency Support Services – a core role for Government agencies working together**

The availability of community based daily living supports and increased specialist clinical expertise will support other government agencies - Health, Education, Family and Community Services and Justice – implement and link innovative programs in areas such as social housing and court diversion.

The State's approach to developing community based services for those

with mental illness will complement Commonwealth initiatives in mental health providing better integration between community based specialist care and primary health care, including those services provided through general practice and by allied health providers.

## Starting the journey of reform

Developing the building blocks to shift the balance from hospital to community-based care, as recommended by the Mental Health Commission, is the immediate priority up to 2016-17.

The three key initiatives that the NSW Government will implement as the first stage in the reform journey are:

### Transitioning long stay patients from the hospital to the community

NSW Health is implementing a phased program to transition long-stay hospital patients into community care, with appropriate clinical and social supports and accommodation.

Currently, there are 380 people receiving long term, hospital based mental health care in NSW.

Over the next 18 months, NSW Health will support 100 of these patients (over the age of 65) in transition to community-based residential aged care. To assist this transition, NSW Health is tendering to identify aged care providers capable of providing the care required. Funding will be provided to enable the construction of the specialist facilities that are needed, and to link these aged care services and facilities with the specialist community mental health teams provided by Health Districts and Networks.

Of the remaining 280 people to transition to community based care, some will be eligible for the community based support provided through the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which is currently being rolled out. NSW Health will work closely with Family and Community Services to ensure eligible patients access the services they need. Solutions will be identified for the remaining patients, to ensure that they are fully supported in the community.

### Developing specialist clinical mental health services in the community

NSW Health is investing in increased specialist capacity in Health Districts and Networks for children and adolescents, older people and adults, while also enhancing Whole Family Teams, in partnership with other care providers. Significant additional funding has been provided to Health Districts and Networks to deliver a substantial increase in client hours for these groups.

Strengthened specialist community mental health teams will provide timely and assertive intervention to prevent the escalation of crisis, further deterioration in health and inevitable admission to hospital. The work of these specialist clinical teams will complement the work of other government agencies and non-government organisations.

Recognising the important role of prevention and early intervention, these specialist health services will also be available to support the work of other government agencies, such as Education, Family and Community Services and Justice, in addressing the needs of high risk groups, including vulnerable families. This includes, for instance, the provision of specialist

mental health support for women experiencing post natal depression and young people moving from a custodial setting to the community.

## **Community living supports**

NSW Health is enhancing partnerships with non-government organisations to deliver health and psychosocial supports for mental health consumers, as well as developing more effective pathways for all agencies to access support for clients.

NSW Health has provided funding for an additional 500 adults with severe mental illness to be supported in the community with flexible, individualised care packages.

Community living supports such as access to housing and psychosocial supports related to self-care, counselling

and advocacy, vocational services and community participation activities, are essential to helping people with mental illness remain in the community. Simple things, such as helping people develop daily living skills, attend medical appointments or to take their medication, can make all the difference to living well within the community.

Clinical management effected through specialist community mental health teams, complemented by access to appropriate living supports organised by non-government organisations, helps those living with a mental illness lead an improved quality of life. As the Mental Health Commission observes, this includes greater social participation and family relationships, better employment and education rates and reduced hospitalisation.

## **More information**

[The Government's Response - Strengthening Mental Health Care in NSW](#)

[Mental Health Reform 12 Months On](#)