



23 November 2023

JOINT COMMUNIQUE – MHCC and PHN NSW/ACT

BACKGROUND

In May 2023 a Joint PHN and Mental Health CMO workshop was held with the aim of opening communication and exploring opportunities and challenges.

Key issues identified at the workshop included:

- Complications associated with PHN funding of services (linked to how PHNs are funded themselves), such as inadequate indexation, varied length of contracts, and lack of certainty around Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) funding continuation.
- Opportunities associated with PHN commissioning services related to improving communication about the drivers of open market approaches compared with direct or select tender approaches.
- Variation in reporting requirements and detail required in activity work plans, frequency of reporting, outcome measures and data collection methods.

We agreed to form a PHN/CMO working group to drive progress to address issues identified at the workshop.

The working group is made up of three CMO CEO representatives (One Door MH, Stride and Flourish), three PHN CEO representatives (Central and Eastern Sydney, Hunter New England Central Coast and Nepean Blue Mountains) the National MH PHN Cooperative Coordinator, NSW MH PHN Network Chair and Mental Health Coordinating Council CEO.

This communique provides an update on the working group and other items of interest.

PHN/CMO WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The PHN/CMO Working Group has met twice since September 2023 and been active in the development of a PHN and Mental Health CMOs Engagement Work Plan. The key activities in the work plan include:

- Opportunities to increase standardisation of tender requirements - which will be led by the National Commissioning Review
- Collaborating between PHNs to review streamline reporting requirements and systems - including KPIs, milestones and frequency of reporting
- Development of a best practice approach to contract management that is values based and enables the development of meaningful relationships
- Improving the application process for funding

- Developing a joint PHN/CMO Workforce Strategy - drawing on the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy and MHCC's Mental Health Workforce Report: CMOs
- Advocating for flexibility in the application of outcome measures for mental health services
- Advocating for longer term contracts and appropriate indexation
- Coordinating communication from PHNs
- Increasing opportunities for shared learnings (e.g., lunch and learn sessions, increased communiques and meeting with Department of Health and Aged Care).

OTHER UPDATES

National Commissioning Review

PHNs and the Department of Health and Aged Care are working on a National Commissioning Review being led by Hunter New England Central Coast PHN with support of Grosvenor. The review will identify opportunities to develop a best practice approach and improve support, sharing and capability in commissioning across PHNs. The review is seeking to address unwarranted variability, eliminate duplication and streamline inefficiencies in commissioning processes across PHNs for the national program. The review is focussing on four key theme areas:

- **Sharing** of knowledge, content, documents, benchmarking and systems
- **Connecting** through communities of practice, events, newsletters and joint commissioning
- **Growing** through training and capability development, and guidance documents
- **Uniting** through submissions, research and policy leadership

Bilateral Agreements

[The National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement](#) is an agreement between the Commonwealth and all states and territories and signed by all parties. The term of this agreement commences as soon as the Commonwealth and one other party signs it (8/3/2022) until 30 June 2026. The [NSW Bilateral Schedule](#) includes eleven initiatives. These are:

1. Adult Mental Health Centre and Satellite Network (Head to Health)
2. Investing in Child Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing
3. Perinatal mental health screening
4. Enhancement and Integration of Youth Mental Health Services
5. Universal Aftercare Services
6. Distress Brief Intervention Trial Program
7. Postvention Support
8. National Phone/Digital Intake Service
9. Initial Assessment and Referral
10. Regional Planning and Commissioning
11. Workforce

Universal Aftercare

Universal Aftercare Services are supported under the NSW Bilateral Schedule. The Commonwealth and NSW are funding the current Way Back Support Service (TWBSS) sites with a plan to roll the model out to new sites. With Beyond Blue handing over the model to the Australian Government, the Commonwealth contracted Roses in the Ocean and Folk to develop key principles for universal aftercare services from the perspective of lived experience. In the future, the service may not be known as TWBSS and may be enhanced across PHN regions to meet local needs.

Joint Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plans

In NSW Joint Regional Plans are due to be submitted to the Department of Health and Aged Care on 7 March 2024. Existing Joint Regional Plans are being updated to include the local planning work PHNs and LHDs have done or will do to support the implementation of the initiatives in the NSW bilateral schedule. The plans will also include any local initiatives important to each PHN region.

Head to Health phone line

The Head to Health Initial Assessment Intake Line was launched nationally on 1 July 2022. All states and territories are now using the **1800 595 212** number to support service navigation and access to both Head to Health centres and other mental health services. The telephony system routes calls to the appropriate intake line based on caller postcode. Nine NSW PHNs are in the process of working towards a hub and spoke model for this service which will see referrals from the intake line managed by each PHN who have knowledge of available services within their region. This new model is aimed to begin 1 July 2024.

Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool ([IAR-DST](#))

PHNs have been tasked with the roll out of training around the IAR-DST to support GPs and primary care providers understand how the tool works to find the right level of service to meet client needs. This training may be extended to commissioned mental health service providers, to help ensure that the same language is being used when supporting access to care. New IAR-DST tools, to support the specific needs of children adolescents and older people, will be released by the end of the calendar year and training on these tools will also be provided. Consultations with LHDs are also seeing their intake staff being trained to become familiar with the tool's language and service level recommendations.

Release of the 10-year National Mental Health Workforce Strategy

The 10-year [National Mental Health Workforce Strategy](#) (Strategy) was published on the Department of Health and Aged Care's website on 10 October 2023.

The Strategy provides a high-level vision and roadmap to build a sustainable workforce that is skilled, well-distributed and supported to deliver mental health treatment, care and support that meets the current and future needs of all Australians.

The Department has also established the National Mental Health Workforce Working Group (Working Group) to oversee and guide implementation of the Strategy. The Working Group includes representatives from all states and territories and people with lived and/or living experience of mental ill-health and will engage with the broader health sector to progress mental health workforce reform.