

Communiqué

November 2021

Preamble

Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee (Committee) was established to provide advice to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services on sexual and reproductive health-related matters in the context of the *Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021* (Strategy) and associated action plans. The Committee is scheduled to meet quarterly.

Sexual Health Research Fund and Research Sub-Committee

The Sexual Health Research Fund (SHRF) was established to provide seed funding for translational research activities to improve the delivery of sexual health services in Queensland and support implementation of the Strategy. The Research Sub-Committee (RSC) is a subset of the Committee and was convened to set research priorities and assess and approve research applications.

This communiqué provides an overview of major items discussed at the fifteenth Committee meeting held on 11 November 2021, and the Research Sub-Committee meeting held on 20 October 2021.

Committee meeting overview

The Committee received a presentation on current sexual health research within Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) populations, and noted the need for future research exploring: stigma-reduction around sexual health, including sexuality and gender identity; intervention efficacy, including peer-led models; and knowledge and capability levels of health workers supporting CALD populations.

The Committee received an epidemiology update on blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections (BBV/STIs) in Queensland, noting that previously increasing testing rates were interrupted during 2020, likely as a consequence of COVID-19 control measures. STI notifications remained high or were trending upward whilst BBV notifications continued to trend downward overall. The Committee observed that Queensland data was reflective of emerging trends elsewhere in Australia and overseas during the COVID-19 pandemic and noted an increase in congenital syphilis cases during 2021.

The Committee received updates on the *North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections Action Plan 2016–2021* (Action Plan), the North Queensland HIV Response, and the co-design process underway to establish a new North Queensland service model. The Action Plan officially concluded on 30 June 2021; however, it has been extended until 30 June 2023 to allow business as usual to occur while the new co-designed service model is developed.

The Committee received updates on the *Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021: Final Progress Report 2019–2021* (Final Progress Report) and the draft *Queensland Sexual Health Framework*

(Framework). The current time-limited Strategy concludes in December 2021 and the Final Progress Report will be published on the Strategy webpage (link below). The Framework is intended for release in December 2021 prior to its commencement from 1 January 2022, and the Committee has received approval for a further three-year term to support its implementation.

During this final meeting of 2021, the Committee considered forward planning for 2022, including a review of their 2021 Workplan and developing the 2022 Workplan having regard for the incoming Framework.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for **24 February 2022**.

Research Sub-Committee Meeting Overview

The RSC met on 20 October 2021 and received an update on Rounds 1, 2 and 3 of the SHRF. The RSC discussed and recommended five research priorities for Round 4, which were endorsed by the full Committee on 11 November 2021.

Round 4 of the SHRF opened on Monday 15 November 2021 with applications closing on Friday 15 April 2022.

More information on Round 4 of the SHRF, including grant guidelines and the application form, can be found at [Queensland Sexual Health Research Fund](#).

More information on the Queensland Sexual Health Strategy and Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee can be found at [Queensland Health Sexual Health Strategy](#) or contact us via email: SexualHealthStrategy@health.qld.gov.au.