

Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

Communiqué – November 2020

Preamble

Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee

The Sexual Health Ministerial Advisory Committee (Committee) was established to provide advice to the Minister for Health and Minister for 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 eleventh Committee meeting held on 12 November 2020, and the Research Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 November 2020.

Committee meeting overview

The Committee acknowledged the impacts of COVID-19 on the wider community and health system and received a number of presentations on sexual health in Queensland. Dr Stephen Lambert, Queensland Health, presented an epidemiology update on *Notifications of bloodborne viruses and sexually transmissible infections (BBVSTI) in Queensland for the period 1 January to 30 September 2020*. The Committee noted the levels of notifications and discussed reductions in testing during COVID-19 restrictions.

Sexual Health Clinical Network Co-Chairs Simon Doyle-Adams and Dr Maree O'Sullivan, Queensland Health, presented on the *COVID-19 impacts on Queensland public sexual health services*, with the Committee noting a reduction in clinic presentations and the redirection of clinic staff to the Queensland Health COVID-19 response.

An update was received from Dr Lea Merone and Dr Karen Murphy, Queensland Health, on the implementation progress of the *North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexually Transmissible Infections Action Plan 2016–2021*. A reduction in notifications of infectious syphilis in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was noted and the possible factors contributing to this were discussed. With the Action Plan due for completion in 2021, the Committee expressed support for an ongoing focus and funding for this issue.

Committee member Ms Barbara Shaw, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, presented on *Sexual abuse and domestic violence – reporting trends during COVID-19*, with the Committee noting increased notification rates, identified risk factors, COVID-19 impacts on Queenslanders experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, and the Government's response.

Committee member Ms Hayley Stevenson, Department of Education, presented on *Child and youth sexual behaviour in Queensland state schools*, with the Committee noting supporting resources available to the state

school sector, curriculum materials, the impact of COVID-19 and reporting trends, and discussing a number of factors on this topic.

The Committee received a presentation from Ms Amanda Reeves, Queensland Health, on *the Relationship Ready project*. Commissioned in partnership with Education Queensland, the project is an outcome of the Committee's Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Forum held in 2018 and aims to address barriers to effective delivery of relationships and sexuality education (RSE). The three-phase project developed by True Relationships and Reproductive Health consists of professional development activities for educators in state school settings and the development of free online resources to support Queensland parents and carers to capably and confidently provide RSE content to their children. This twelve-month project is due for completion by 30 June 2021.

Parent/carer resources can be accessed here - <https://www.true.org.au/education/course-catalogue/course?eventtemplate=73-relationship-ready-parent-carer-pack>

An update on *Syphilis in Queensland* was provided by Ms Catherine Spucches, Queensland Health. The Committee noted the *Lady Peeps* health promotion project for vulnerable women, as well as an update regarding syphilis notifications and a recent rise in gonorrhoea notifications in Queensland, with the Committee requesting a gonorrhoea update be provided at each meeting.

The Committee received an update on progress of the projects funded in the Sexual Health Research Fund Rounds 1 and 2, and the Committee discussed and endorsed four recommended research projects for funding in Round 3.

The next Committee meeting is scheduled for 11 February 2021.

Research Sub-Committee Meeting Overview

The RSC met on 4 November 2020 and received an update on Rounds 1 and 2 of the SHRF and discussed the Round 3 research applications.

The RSC assessed nine applications for Round 3, with four successful applications recommended to receive funding.

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