

Rural and Remote Services

The *Mental Health Act 2016* provides for the declaration of authorised mental health services (AMHS) by the chief psychiatrist. The chief psychiatrist may declare an AMHS (rural and remote), in which specific provisions of the Act apply.

What is an AMHS?

An AMHS is a health service that provides treatment and care to persons with a mental illness.

They are declared by the chief psychiatrist by gazette notice.

An AMHS may be in the public or private sector.

What is a rural and remote AMHS?

The chief psychiatrist may declare an AMHS, or part of an AMHS, to be an AMHS (rural and remote) if satisfied the service is in a rural or remote area.

The Act provides enhanced flexibility for AMHSs (rural and remote) in two key areas – assessments and reviews of treatment authorities.

How are assessments different in a rural and remote AMHS?

A recommendation for assessment authorises an authorised doctor to assess a person to decide if a treatment authority should be made for the person.

The authorised doctor who makes the assessment must not be the same doctor who made the recommendation for assessment.

However, the Act provides that an authorised doctor in an AMHS (rural and remote) may do both a recommendation for assessment, and the assessment, if another authorised doctor is not reasonably available to do the assessment.

This may occur, for example, in a remote area without access to audio-visual technology.

How does the review of treatment authorities differ in a rural and remote AMHS?

Where a treatment authority is made by an authorised doctor who is not a psychiatrist, an authorised psychiatrist must review the treatment authority to decide whether to confirm, amend or revoke the treatment authority.

The review is to occur within 3 days after the treatment authority is made.

However, if the person subject to the treatment authority is a patient of an AMHS (rural and remote), the review period may be extended to 7 days if it is not reasonably practicable to complete the review within 3 days.

What other ways does the Act provide flexibility in the provision of services in rural and remote areas?

The Act enables the chief psychiatrist to declare AMHSs with conditions. This can be used to facilitate the provision of treatment and care to persons in rural and remote areas, for example, by allowing a more limited range of services to be provided at a small rural hospital.