



## Mental health review makes 37 recommendations

Extra staff, greater medical oversight and a renewed emphasis on staff development and training is set to bolster the Charters Towers Community Mental Health Service (CTCMHS).

On February 5, the Townsville Hospital and Health Board received a review into the CTCMHS service which made 37 recommendations, all of which have been formally endorsed.

The review highlighted the challenges the CTCMHS had faced in delivering mental health care over the past two years with high demand for services and a frequent turnover of team leadership.

In August 2017, Townsville Hospital and Health Service (HHS) chief executive Dr Peter Bristow appointed an independent clinical reviewer after concerns were raised by current and former staff of the CTCMHS about the care being delivered.

The clinical reviewer, Ms Shirley Wigan, did a thorough review of 105 client's records looking at the care against criteria including: clinical practice, procedural compliance and documentation standards. A separate review, conducted internally, provided a broader picture of the case load and work practices of the CTCMHS team.

The reviews found systemic issues in how the team was operating but nothing directly linked to any adverse clinical incidents.

Townsville Hospital and Health Board Chair Tony Mooney said providing timely and safe mental health care, particularly in rural areas, was a critical component in the care the health service provides.

Mr Mooney said in receiving the review the Board had committed resources and immediate approval to implement the recommendations.

"The Board has made the resources available for the chief executive to implement these recommendations as a priority," he said.

"This has included the immediate approval to advertise for two additional clinicians for the team. It also includes independent and clinical oversight of the rollout of these recommendations by an external project officer who began this week.

"Progress of the rollout of this work will be reported regularly to the Board and the community."

Acting Townsville HHS chief executive Mr Kieran Keyes said since the recommendations had been endorsed by the Board, staff had been briefed, consumers had been contacted and the process of implementing the recommendations had begun.

"My commitment to the community today is that all 37 recommendations made by Ms Wigan will be implemented in 12 months," he said.

"Delivering safe and high-quality health care is our highest priority and these reviews have shown we could have done better.

# Media statement



“The job now is to get on with it and we will work with and support the team to deliver the very best care to these people within our communities.”

The CTCMHS provides community-based support for people with mental illness who live within the Charters Towers, Hughenden and Richmond communities.

People are referred to the service by general practitioners, hospital emergency departments or by NGOs. After an initial assessment, a plan is developed to support the consumer in the community. This may include home visits, transition to work, medication compliance and regular risk assessments with the consumer and their family, friends and social network.

The consumer’s general practitioner is also involved in this care.

Mr Mooney said mental health was an important cog in the support provided by the health service, particularly to people in rural areas.

“We have a clear plan to improve our services in the western areas of our HHS and I have every confidence in what these recommendations can achieve.”

Mr Keyes said the executive summary of Ms Wigan’s report as well as a summary of the 37 recommendations would be available on the Townsville Hospital and Health Service’s website.

**Ends**

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