

14th August 2019

Government Response to the Mental Health Integration Taskforce Report - what it means for family and friends of people with mental illness

Following from the Report and Recommendations of the Mental Health Integration Taskforce, the Tasmanian government released its response on the 30th of July 2019. We have provided a summary below, and given some information as to how it will impact on family and friends of people with mental illness. The full Taskforce report and the government's response can be found [here](#).

The government response accepted all 21 of the recommendations of the Taskforce, which identified:

... that the lack of alignment of the processes between inpatient services and all other community clinical services was contributing to a system that was "hospital- centric"; that is, the hospital was prioritised above both the needs of the consumer and of community services. This was considered the primary reason for the major disconnection between inpatient services and community-based services.

Other areas of concern identified by the Taskforce included:

- the level of integration between the clinical services provided by the alcohol and drug services and the specialised mental health service;*
- the relationship between the public mental health system and primary care;*
- the manner in which the different models of Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (CATT) provision, triage, the dedicated Mental Health Services Helpline, the role of Psychiatric Emergency Nurses (PENs), and the new Mental Health Hospital in the Home (HITH) Service connect;*
- a poorly designed "front end" of the system, creating difficulty in either accessing or navigating the system; and*
- the absence of a single real-time clinical information system for mental health.*

Following from this, the government has committed to eight actions to improve the integration of mental health services in southern Tasmania. It is expected that many of these will be applied to the north and north-west of the state in the future. In summary, they are the following:

Action 1 – Establish a Mental Health Hospital Avoidance Program in Southern Tasmania

Action 2 – Establish Integration Hubs at St Johns Park and the Peacock Centre

Action 3 – Establish an integrated post and after care suicide response as part of the Mental Health Hospital Avoidance Program.

Action 4 – Review the model of care for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, with a focus on the integration of service responses for adolescents across community and inpatient settings.

Action 5 – Establish a dedicated state-wide response to people with complex needs

Action 6 – Continue with key reforms of the Alcohol and Drug Sector and as a result of the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Action 7 – Use the National Mental Health Service Planning Framework to inform regional planning and service commissioning.

Action 8 – Establish dedicated project resources, along with project governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure regular reporting on progress.

These actions can be viewed in more detail in the full government response.

It will take some time for the actions to be rolled out, commencing about a year from now, and taking at least 18 months to implement. While change will not be immediate, in practice, this will impact family, friends, and carers of those with mental illness in the following ways:

- As part of Action 1,
 - there will be GP assistance out of hours;
 - there will be centre-based alternatives for assessment and treatment 24/7 as alternatives to the emergency department;
 - expanded Adult Community Mental Health Services; and
 - 27 beds as the residential (overnight care) component of a Mental Health Hospital Avoidance Program

In addition,

- Services will be easier to use and access
- Different services will be linked, enabling consumers and their carers to better access the level of support that they require. This will include integration of housing, social, employment, disability, and health services
- The “integration hub” at St John’s Park and the Peacock Centre will include the co-location of these services
- Those with complex needs (i.e., those with multiple symptoms in addition to their mental illness) will receive specialised care aimed at improving outcomes and reducing bed block and ED wait times.
- **Overall outcomes for those with mental illness will be improved, thereby easing the load taken by friends, family, and carers.**

We hope that this summary will prove useful to you as the changes are eventually rolled out.

Maxine Griffiths AM

CEO Mental Health Carers Tasmania

OUR VISION

Carers of people affected by mental ill health are understood, respected, valued and supported to build their capacities and improve their qualities of life.