Fact Sheet 8 – What this means for non-clinical support services such as housing, employment, education, justice and welfare

Key issues

- Of significant concern is the fact our current system is not designed with the needs of people and families at its core. These needs are wider than health services and are about supporting recovery and leading “a contributing life” within the community.

- Non-clinical services play a crucial role in prevention of and recovery from mental illness.

- Australia still spends a disproportionate amount of its mental health budget on hospital treatment, particularly on treatment in stand-alone psychiatric hospitals, and on income support. Better early intervention and non-clinical support might have enabled people to live stable lives, maintain relationships and participate in education and employment.

- People can end up in hospital when their condition deteriorates because they could not access the services and support they needed, including non-clinical supports such as housing, employment and support to stay in education. The lack of information sharing between different providers is also of significant concern. For example, due to lack of information sharing, a housing provider may not be aware of a change in the needs of a resident: hence when a person’s behaviour changes because of a mental health problem they do not know how to respond to it.

- Likewise people have multiple unlinked health and social records across systems. This means they must tell their story multiple times. Support services can be unaware of issues which are important in making decisions about their care.

- For those with low prevalence, more complex needs, the lack of an accessible, shared eHealth record can be particularly critical to their mental health outcomes.

Key responses

- The biggest change the Commission would like to see is for services to be arranged around the needs of individuals, rather than individuals having to organise themselves around the system and service providers.

- An ideal person-centred mental health system features clearly defined pathways between health and mental health. It also recognises the importance of non-health supports such as housing, justice, employment and education, and emphasises cost-effective, community-based care.

- When mental health issues arise, the Commission supports a new model of person-centred, stepped care across Australia, where services are matched to individual need.

- A stepped care approach supports individuals and their families to take greater responsibility for their own mental and physical wellbeing. Stepped care services include options to support and provide wrap-around services.
**Stepped care, where services are matched to individual need**

Adapted from *The Case For Mental Health Reform in Australia: a Review of Expenditure and System Design*, Medibank Private and Nous Group (2013)

- Information sharing between different service providers enables optimal care of the person irrespective of the services involved. A person-centred approach works to a single care plan and requires different agencies to share information when required. Locally this means each worker can speak to each other confidentially.

- As such, the Commission recommends linking receipt of ongoing Commonwealth funding for Government, NGO and privately provided services to demonstrated performance, and use of a single care plan and eHealth record for those with complex needs.

- Supporting families and promoting early invention across people’s lives also is a strong theme of the Review. This includes supporting a healthy start to life, building resilience and targeting interventions for families with children, and developing and implementing a national framework to support families and communities. Examples include:
  - building on the success of Housing First initiatives and recognising that initial expenditure will be more than offset with savings in use of crisis and inpatient services;
  - scaling-up court diversion and justice reinvestment schemes to ensure that people whose criminal behaviour is prompted by a struggle with mental illness and/or addiction are diverted to therapeutic rather than custodial interventions;
  - ensuring that schools, universities and colleges are supported to build a mentally healthy and open culture which discourages discrimination and supports help-seeking, as well as flexible pathways through education which ensure mental illness is no barrier to achieving academic, sporting or vocational potential;
  - developing partnerships between governments and businesses to ensure that meaningful employment is equally accessible whether someone has a mental health difficulty or not;
  - supporting carers into employment at the same time as the people they are caring for are being supported into employment; and
  - bringing Australia up to the standard of the OECD countries which have higher rates of employment for people with disabilities.