



## **What are the Mental Health Taskforces up to in NSW?**

### **Currently there are two mental health taskforces in NSW:**

- **The Mental Health Implementation Taskforce**
- **The Priority Taskforce for Mental Health**

**The Mental Health Implementation Taskforce** has been operating since March 2004. The role of the Taskforce is to oversee the implementation of the Government Response to the 2002 Senate Select Committee Inquiry into Mental Health Services in NSW and similarly to oversee the implementation of the Government's response to the Report of the NSW Sentinel Events Review Committee. The establishment of a sound structure on which to base future funding and improvements is also a key function of the Taskforce. The Taskforce is chaired by Dr Brian Pezzutti who also chaired the Senate Inquiry and membership comprises political representation, senior NSW Health staff, clinicians and community representation including NGOs and consumers and carers.

### **MHCC Executive Officer Jenna Bateman sits on this Taskforce for MHCC.**

The Implementation Taskforce has monitored some positive initiatives such as the recently released NSW Interagency Action Plan for Better Mental Health which stemmed from the Government's response to recommendations 1 and 2 of the Inquiry. This plan details an across government approach to mental health and can be accessed at <http://www.cabinet.nsw.gov.au/interagency.pdf>

Recommendation 3 of the Inquiry called for an independent review of the incidence and circumstances of suicide in NSW. This work has been monitored by the Taskforce and has resulted in a formal strategy of training and protocols within mental health services.

A number of recommendations pointed to the need to review the Mental Health Act 1990 and this process has also been monitored by the Taskforce. The second draft for public comment is due out in October 2005.

Work occurring around each of the 120 recommendations within the Inquiry has been detailed and is reported on at the Taskforce meetings. It is envisaged that a final report be produced on the implementation of the recommendations for general dissemination. The Implementation Taskforce is scheduled to disband at the end of 2005.

**The NSW Mental Health Priority Taskforce** has been established by the NSW government as an advisory body to contribute to the development of new policy directions and service improvements in the mental health system. It has been in operation since June 2005. The Taskforce was recently briefed on the new *Interagency Action Plan for Better Mental Health* and will be involved in its ongoing implementation process.

The Taskforce, made up of a group of mental health stakeholders from the government and non-government sector, will be kept up to date on current developments and be asked to comment on future directions for mental health services in NSW over the next 2 to 5 years. **MHCC Chairperson, Leone Crayden sits on this Taskforce for MHCC.**

The origins of this Taskforce lie with the Minister for Health's announcement of reforms to the NSW health system detailed in the document *Planning Better Health*. The reforms include a new clinical and community participation framework, which includes the establishment of the Health Care Advisory Council and Health Priority Taskforces (one of which is the MHPT). The Health Priority Taskforces will maintain linkages with each other and report to the Health Care Advisory Council, which in turn will provide advice to the Director-General and Minister for Health.

The Terms of Reference of the Mental Health Priority Taskforce include:

- Provide direction and leadership for the development of an integrated mental health service for NSW
- Provide advice in relation to strategic planning for NSW mental health services
- Establish and maintain effective linkages for planning and communication
- Engage the community and carers in consultation, policy development, service planning, implementation and evaluation
- Review mental health programs and initiatives
- Investigate new and innovative models of service delivery

The Taskforce most recently held a planning workshop in which they identified priority themes including:

- Prevention, early recognition, early intervention and promotion
- Acute care (including police and ambulance)
- Long term care, community and family support (rehab and recovery)
- Service integration (overlap areas [substance misuse, developmental disability, physical illness], GPs and other health sectors)
- Resources and capacity of health workforce.

Specific actions have also been recommended and relevant partners identified. Central to all of these priority themes are: areas of need (rural and remote, indigenous and CALD), General Practitioners (GPs) and quality of service

**'View from the Peak'  
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