

Make Mental Health a Priority

In 2018-19, \$2.1 billion will be invested in mental health services in NSW. Despite this substantial investment, many people living with mental health conditions cannot get the community supports they need and mental health related emergency department presentations continue to rise.

NSW spends a lower proportion of its mental health budget on community mental health services compared to other states. There is significant evidence that quality community services provide better outcomes for people, carers and their families and takes pressure off other parts of the health system. NSW needs more services provided in the community by organisations with a strong local presence and the ability to respond to peoples' needs in the right place, at the right time.

The Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) is the peak body for community managed mental health organisations. Community Managed Organisations (CMOs) deliver services that embody a trauma informed, recovery oriented practice approach. CMOs support people to live well in the community through a range of health and social services including counselling, housing and tenancy support, employment and education opportunities, social inclusion and physical health care.

MHCC have collaborated with consumers, carers and service providers to develop "[Mental Health Matters - Future Investment Priorities for NSW](#)". The report identifies the following three priorities for investment.



1) increased **supported living services** for people living with mental health conditions (HASI/CLS type supports) that also address physical health needs



2) **step-up, step-down** facilities to bridge the gap between acute care and community living



3) more community mental health **one-stop hubs** to provide peer support and a range of services in one location

The Mental Health Matters report does not attempt to replicate the work undertaken by numerous other reports and while not exhaustive, action in the areas identified would significantly improve outcomes for people living with mental health conditions across NSW and represent opportunities to maximise expenditure savings. To achieve this, we require a Government willing to commit to these programs and service design that puts consumers and carers at the centre.

[You can find the report here](#) - MHCC hopes the report will assist Candidates and Parties in preparing their mental health policies. On page 2 we are asking for your commitment to our top four mental health priorities.

MHCC is calling on Candidates and Political Parties to prioritise mental health in the 2019 NSW Election and support the following recommendations:



Will you support - Expanding community based mental health services to support the recovery and economic and social inclusion of people living with mental health conditions

Yes **No**

People living with mental health conditions should be able to get the support they need, when they need it, rather than waiting for a crisis to occur. Too many people rely on hospital emergency departments because they cannot find the support they need in the community. NSW allocates only 7% of its mental health budget to services delivered by community managed organisations compared to a national average of 14%. This is despite rigorous evaluations demonstrating the value and efficacy of programs such as the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI). An expansion of community based mental health services will deliver positive health, social and economic results.



Will you support - Investing in Step Up, Step Down services to bridge the gap between hospital care and community living

Yes **No**

Step Up, Step Down services provide clinical, self care and recovery based interventions in a homelike environment. They can both assist people discharged from hospital return home in a gradual and supported way and provide a step up function whereby someone at risk of admission can either be referred or self refer. Unlike other states, NSW does not have a network of Step Up, Step Down services. There is strong evidence to show these services reduce emergency department presentations and hospitalisation and improve outcomes for individuals. Step Up, Step Down services have a return on investment of 1.0, which means they pay for themselves through savings in other parts of the system.



Will you support - Supporting community mental health hubs with co located services and peer support

Yes **No**

Navigating the mental health service system has been identified as a barrier by consumers, families and carers. General Practice is experiencing unprecedented mental health presentations and GP's consider mental health as the issue causing most concern for the future. Integrated community based mental health hubs provide a range of co-located and peer support services for people experiencing mental health difficulties and are already being piloted in NSW through the LikeMind centres. Co-designed community mental health hubs will provide people with a clear pathway for service coordination as well as other related services.



Will you support - Implementing a Community Managed Mental Health Sector Development Strategy

Yes **No**

Non government community managed organisations are central to responding to the needs of people living with mental health conditions. Mental health reform and NDIS implementation demands a well developed community sector able to respond effectively to complexity. This requires a strategic approach to developing the community mental health sector, with a focus on workforce and training; improving the management and collection of data; developing leadership and facilitating engagement with other key stakeholders including Local Health Districts and Primary Health Networks.

Please send your response to comms@mhcc.org.au by 19 March 2019