



Mental Health Reform Advisory Committee

Meeting 5 Summary – 8 March 2024

The advisory committee met for the fifth time on 8 March 2024.

Members acknowledged Australia's mental health system is facing the same deep, structural challenges as the broader health system. Addressing these challenges requires a staged approach, closely considered in the context of work underway including the renegotiation of the National Health Reform Agreement, the Government's response to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review and the Government's Strengthening Medicare reforms.

Members discussed the rapid development of commercial AI solutions over the last 18 months and the international experience of AI in health services. Members noted the need to consider ethical, legal, safety and regulatory risks in an Australian context. Challenges to consider include varying levels of AI and digital literacy, access to technology, and digital health acceptance and trust amongst health professionals and the community. These are particularly pertinent in the mental health system, due to the sensitivity of health data and risks to patient safety.

Members considered future priorities for mental health reform in the immediate and longer-term in relation to the advisory committee's key areas of focus over the past six months:

- distributional equity of mental health care
- low intensity services and models of care
- solutions for people with complex needs, and
- triage, assessment and referral.

Members emphasised the need for models of care outside of Medicare-subsidised clinical treatment, including greater use of low intensity digital services, and better targeting of clinical treatment.

Members acknowledged progress on mental health reform requires an expansion of the mental health workforce, ensuring all health professionals are able to work to their full scope of practice, and greater support for the broader mental health workforce.

The Chair thanked members for sharing their time and expertise throughout each of the meetings, and for their commitment to improving the mental health system.