



Australian Government
Department of Health

Communique 27 March 2020

National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce

On 27 March 2020, the first meeting of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce (the Taskforce) was held. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the meeting was held by teleconference.

The Taskforce will oversee the development of a 10 year National Mental Health Workforce Strategy. It will advise the Commonwealth Department of Health and the National Mental Health Commission, who are jointly developing the Strategy.

The Taskforce is co-chaired by Jennifer Taylor PSM and Thomas Brideson. Membership of the Taskforce includes representatives from professional, peak and peer groups, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the education sector, a labour market expert; and consumers and carers. A full list of members can be found [here](#).

The Taskforce noted the current and evolving situation with the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on the operations of the Taskforce. Members agreed to meet by video and/or teleconference with meetings occurring more frequently and for shorter duration.

It was also noted that it will be important to consult with the sector, including consumers and carers, as the Strategy is developed. This will need to be done in a manner that takes account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority Areas

The Taskforce agreed on a number of priority areas to further progress and inform the development of the Strategy. These include:

- Rural and Remote
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Communities
- Workforce Training and Education
- Peer and Lived Experience
- Inter-jurisdictional and Inter-governmental.

Members also noted the:

- need for the mental health workforce to have the skills required to operate in different models of service provision and
- role of both consumers and carers and their contribution to each of the priority areas.

Working groups, led by individual members of the Taskforce, will further examine each priority area. Membership of the working groups and how they will operate will be discussed at the next meeting of the Taskforce.

The Taskforce also agreed to further consider other areas of significance as the Strategy is developed.

Action Areas

Members also agreed on immediate actions that would support their role. These include:

- A literature review of existing jurisdictional workforce strategies and the most recent findings of mental health reviews and inquiries, including the:
 - Productivity Commission's inquiry into mental health,
 - Senate report on the *Accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia*, and
 - Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system.
- Data analysis that identifies:
 - what the current and future supply and demand of the mental health workforce might look like, including demand implications of other sectors including the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Alcohol and Other Drugs and Aged Care; and
 - data gaps for the non-registered mental health practitioners and how to address them.
- Labour market analysis of the mental health workforce looking at the:
 - viability of private practice from an employee, employer and commissioners of services view point;
 - peer workforce pressures and opportunities; and
 - appropriate investment in the mental health workforce
- A review of the capacity of educational institutions in the tertiary, vocational and community education sectors to respond to increased demand for mental health workers, with a discussion on training requirements and incentives for employers to provide training.

The Department of Health and the National Mental Health Commission will progress these matters in consultation with the Taskforce and subject matter experts.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Taskforce will be held on Friday 24 April and will focus on the role of the working groups in addressing priority areas.