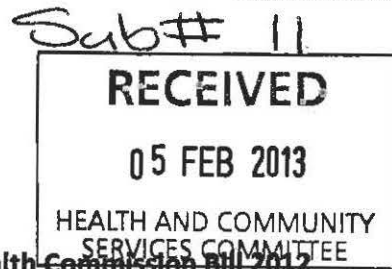


Mr Trevor Ruthenberg MP
 Chair
 Health and Community Services Committee
 Parliament House
 Brisbane Qld 4000



Queensland Mental Health Commission Bill 2012

As the peak organisation in Queensland representing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health sector, we welcome the Queensland Mental Health Commission Bill 2012 and look forward to the realisation of goals associated with the setting up of the Commission.

Administration of the policy will largely determine progress in this field and as an organisation representing numerous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, we wish to make the following points regarding practical working arrangements -

Working Together

- The Community reform model at the heart of the Bill has a good deal in common with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) program funded by the Commonwealth. This program was set up to address the grief, suffering and loss experienced by the Stolen Generations. Through its application the Commission will need to ensure that programs established to support this area are developed as complimentary components to current programs and not in competition or duplication.
- Resilience building is an important theme for staff working in this field, particularly working with members of the Stolen Generations in community. The Workers involved in the program require and have developed a high degree of cultural competence complemented by a strong and credible evidence base and a broad and credible skills set. SEWB Staff in community controlled services across Queensland are supported by a small group of professionals located in the QAIHC offices at West End, Rockhampton and Cairns.
- Professional isolation is a major issue for Indigenous SEWB and State mental health Workers, as there is very little connection between programs and services delivered. Consequently we would envisage the Commission would play a leading role in providing professional support for all workers in this field to ensure consistency in practices and approach to service delivery.
- It is considered that more positive outcomes could be achieved by:
 - Building a cumulative knowledge base shared by workers across the various programs e.g. our workers on the ground have particular knowledge of the long term gaps and deficiencies associated with this sector.
 - Information and experience sharing, e.g. State Conference involving State and Commonwealth workers similar to the recent Conference conducted in NSW
 - Fostering greater cultural respect so important in the service provider/client context e.g. our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SEWB workers are very knowledgeable in this regard and could share this knowledge with other workers.

- o Increased emphasis on community-based programs supporting mental health sufferers or those at risk of being institutionalised, as a means of reducing the numbers of our people coming into contact with the forensic mental health system.

Advisory Council

- The interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be represented on the Advisory Council, and this appears to be reflected in the current information about the proposed Council
- It will be important for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representative to bring to the Council both a broad strategic view and a good knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicing on the ground.
- QAIHC would be happy to support the identification of persons who would represent the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both working with and affected by this Bill.

Strategic Plan

- It is noted that the QMHC will be responsible for preparing and facilitating the implementation of a whole of Government Strategic Plan
- Whether this work is undertaken by either the Council or a committee yet to be formed, the representation of the interests and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be essential
- QAIHC would seek to support the preparation of the Strategic Plan, as we are aware of how a range of services affect our people and what is likely to produce the most beneficial outcomes.

Yours Sincerely



Selwyn Button
CEO
Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC)