

Submission to the Mental Health Select Committee

From [REDACTED]

27 January 2022

I include my mother's name and request confidentiality regarding use of her name. I will refer to her by her name, rather than Mum. Her name is [REDACTED] and she is currently a mental health outpatient of RBWH being seen externally in her aged care home by a case manager. I am her Enduring Power of Attorney and her supporter at the Mental Health Tribunal.

This submission is not just about [REDACTED] but relates to all mental health patients of RBWH Metro North and I am making this submission with the aim of highlighting the current lack of equity for mental health patients who require physiotherapy. The lack of physiotherapy in the RBWH Mental Health Unit, and in particular, the Older Person's Mental Health Unit, has a negative economic and societal impact.

[REDACTED] has mobility issues due to Guillain Barre syndrome and has a shunt in her skull to drain fluid from the brain. She uses a wheelie walker and lives in aged care where she receives regular physiotherapy and occupational therapy to assist her mobility and balance.

Prior to admission to RBWH Mental Health Unit on May 22, 2021, [REDACTED] had been suffering from Rhinovirus for almost two weeks, was in isolation at Regis and experiencing a renewal of her Bipolar symptoms. She had been previously admitted with psychosis to the MHU in November 2020 and stayed for four weeks, giving her private health coverage (\$13,840.25 for that admission) over to RBWH.

On May 22, 2021, [REDACTED] was re-admitted to RBWH for mental health treatment with the aim of altering her medication under psychiatric supervision.

However, in the weeks that [REDACTED] was in the Mental Health Unit (MHU), she received no physiotherapy, and had very limited walking with no access to sunshine on the deck. The deck entrance has one handrail and a ramp. Without the assistance of an aide, the deck was inaccessible for [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] became severely debilitated and had to leave the MHU and be transferred to Emergency followed by 9B South, where she spent about another week, received oxygen 24/7 as well as physiotherapy, and her health improved.

[REDACTED] was transferred back to the Older Person's Mental Health Unit to re-start treatment which had to be ceased to treat her physical symptoms.

[REDACTED] was discharged on June 29, 2021. She was an inpatient for nearly seven weeks (\$14,825.70 for that admission).

Physiotherapy services are available and funded for acute wards at RBWH, but not the MHU.

Whilst I'm sure that the MHU is providing the best care they can with the resources they have, the resources are lacking to give patients access to multidisciplinary services that are available for non MHU patients. The lack of physiotherapy contributed to the complications that [REDACTED] experienced. [REDACTED] was admitted able to walk with a wheelie walker and was discharged deconditioned to the point that she needed a wheelchair and rehabilitation to be able to breathe without oxygen.

What should have been a much shorter and less expensive stay in hospital led to a poorer outcome for [REDACTED] and continues for other patients who have both mental and physical illness.

On June 30, 2021, the day after [REDACTED] was discharged from the MHU for the second time in 2021, following consultation with RBWH staff including a senior person within the Physiotherapy Department to whom I was referred, I wrote to the Health Minister, The Hon Yvette D'Ath, to request that consideration be given for a budget to introduce inpatient physiotherapy for MHU inpatients. This has been requested by the Physiotherapy Department for at least four years.

Two calls to the Minister's office later, on December 3, 2021, I received a positive letter from the Acting Chief Executive Metro North Health, Adjunct Professor Jackie Hanson, stating that "On 29 November 2021, a productive and favourable meeting was held between the Senior Leadership of both RBWH and MNMH-RBWH. A proposal will be developed and presented to both the Metro North Mental Health and the RBWH Executive Teams for consideration."

I have checked with the RBWH Metro North Physiotherapy Department and to this date there has not been a response or progress yet from Metro North Mental Health Unit's side. I have had confirmed that the RBWH Executive is committed to providing funding for 0.3FTE of a 0.5FTE physiotherapy position to the RBWH Older Person's Mental Health Unit, but this is contingent on support from the MH Stream, which is yet to be confirmed.

Central support from the Mental Health Branch would be ideal to ensure access to Mental Health physiotherapy services is available across the State and funded to the appropriate level.

As a retired State school teacher, [REDACTED] has private health insurance which is usually given over to the Queensland Government to refund her care.

Following [REDACTED] most recent discharge from RBWH Older Person's Mental Health Unit, she required private consultations with a thoracic physician and private physiotherapy in addition to the physiotherapy through her aged care provider to enable her to give up the wheelchair and walk again, and to breathe without oxygen.

The financial costs of accessing quality mental health and allied health care including physiotherapy, must be a barrier for others.

I would value the opportunity to present and answer questions personally if the opportunity is available at a later stage. I consider myself not only an advocate for [REDACTED] but also for people experiencing mental illness, and all mental health patients in Queensland.

For privacy reasons, please redact [REDACTED] name from any final published version.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]