




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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ADJOURNMENT

Community Mental Health Services

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (6.24 pm): I rise this evening to tell the House about how we can better support people suffering with mental illness through community mental health services. This brief speech has been prepared by my parliamentary intern from 2022, Jessica Cunningham, whose assignment was to review access to mental health services and investigate alternative approaches of community and supportive accommodation models. Jess is a remarkable young woman and a passionate, committed intern. The report she prepared is outstanding. Her ability to grasp and understand the complexities of the mental health system and alternative approaches is remarkable. I commend her report to all members for reading, and I table a copy of her report for the public record.

Tabled paper: Report by Jessica Cunningham for Mr Rob Molhoek MP, undated, titled 'Inquiry into community mental health services: Responding to the issue of social isolation and loneliness faced by the severely mentally ill in Queensland' [415](#).

Queensland's current approach to mental health service delivery via hospitalisation is outdated, expensive and exclusionist. Emergency departments have often become the only option for people seeking mental health care. As mental health care is divided between state and federal governments, one million Australians are being excluded and neglected by the mental health system. These people are the missing middle—people whose mental health is too complex and severe for primary care but who are not unwell enough for hospital care. The Queensland Alliance for Mental Health has identified an urgent need to establish alternatives to mental health care.

Research has found that lonely people are more likely to suffer serious mental illness. Social isolation and loneliness must then be considered in the solution to this issue. Research has also shown that a lack of housing and employment are significant contributors to mental ill health. There are alternative models for community mental health services. Supported accommodation models perform better than standardised care. Supported employment models of health care provide avenues for those struggling to support themselves. Community social participation and support models are both flexible for patients and reduce social isolation; however, several issues affect the performance of community-based services. Funding, training and the siloing of operations and sectors has resulted in poor cooperation and partnerships between some organisations to the detriment of their patients.

Jess has suggested—and I am speaking on behalf of Jess—that the Queensland government refocus mental health expenditure and invest in community mental health service models with priority given to supported accommodation, supported employment and community social participation and support models to better support the missing middle with their mental ill health. It was my great privilege—and perhaps the reason Jess decided to make this her research topic—to serve on the select committee for mental health last year. We did see many examples of excellent support in the community, and that is some of the work that Jess refers to in her report.