

National safety priorities in mental health: a national plan for reducing harm



effective
appropriate
efficient
responsive
accessible
safe
continuous
capable
sustainable

National safety priorities
in mental health:
a national plan for
reducing harm

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Foreword

This Plan is the first national statement about safety improvement activity in mental health. Safety is a critical component of quality, and this Plan builds on the other significant quality improvement work progressing under the National Mental Health Strategy, as well as the recent developments in other health care sectors that have been progressed by the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care.

The National Mental Health Working Group seeks to use the plan to provide leadership in the four national priority areas where stakeholders agree collectively we can prevent adverse events, do less harm, and make mental health services safer. The plan also provides a blueprint and access to tools that are important in identifying, measuring and developing system changes that can reduce harm in all areas of need in the sector.

The selected priorities are the starting points for galvanising action and they signal the intention of all jurisdictions to act to improve the safety of mental health services. It is also hoped that the Plan will be understood and supported in other sectors, such as primary care services and support services delivering care to people with mental disorders, to think about how they can make mental health care safer.

The delivery of health care in Australia is complex. Care is provided across a range of settings and services, in both the public and private sector, and across health and community sectors. The Plan acknowledges this complexity. Activities such as those aimed at reducing, and where possible eliminating, seclusion and restraint by their nature relate to acute service settings. While others, such as those aimed at reducing adverse drug events, are relevant to a range of sectors and settings in which mental health care is delivered.

There are strong links between the safety work of the National Mental Health Working Group and the work of the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care. They share a message that strong commitment, adequate resources, and effective and appropriate governance structures are essential for safety and quality improvement. The Plan recognises that many individuals play an essential role in implementing the identified strategies and that action is needed not only by those providing mental health care, but by **those** who have governance responsibility for health care and those working in other health sectors where patients need care for both physical and mental illness.

The National Mental Health Working Group is committed to monitoring key activity under the Plan and will prioritise strategies for nationally coordinated implementation. The Working Group will also actively seek partnership opportunities with the recently announced Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care and other safety and quality stakeholders, just as it has with the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care.

Partnerships will also be fostered with those involved in emergency mental health care, including those working outside mental health services like ambulance and police services. Everyone is encouraged to take forward safety improvement activities and form partnerships based on analysis of local issues.

The inclusion of consumers, carers and families is an essential and valued aspect of the successful implementation of many of the strategies in this Plan.

Our appreciation and thanks is extended to the members of the Safety and Quality in Mental Health Partnership Group, in particular the Chair, Dr Aaron Groves, for their hard work and to the Australian Government for their support in developing a Plan that provides the basis for substantial improvements in the safety of mental health services.



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