

2 December 2021

## **Southern NSW accepts all recommendations from independent mental health review**

Following a detailed, independent review of Southern NSW Local Health District's non-acute mental health services, the District can confirm all 18 recommendations have been accepted and an action plan developed to further improve mental health care.

The report noted the District's focus and commitment to providing high quality, safe, accessible and contemporary non-acute mental health services, while also making the following recommendations:

- Enhance the Lived Experience Workforce
- Improve drug and alcohol services and support
- Improve accessibility of information for mental health consumers, families and carers
- Raise the profile of inpatient non-acute mental health services

The independent, expert panel included a psychiatrist, a mental health director of nursing and a person with lived experience of mental illness. The review process included inspections of the District's facilities; interviews with staff, consumers, families and carers; review of District documentation; submissions from community members and stakeholders; and a review of current literature and best practice models of care

With the recommendations being accepted in full, the District has prepared its formal response, which includes a range of actions to be implemented within the next 12 months, notably:

- No change to bed numbers at Goulburn's Ron Hemmings Unit (non-acute inpatient unit);
- Employment of six additional Lived Experience positions across the District;
- Employment of three new Aboriginal mental health clinicians in Goulburn, Eurobodalla and Bega;
- Development of a new and improved District-wide model of care for non-acute mental health services; and
- Expansion of virtual care infrastructure and teams across the District.

District Director of Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drugs, Damien Eggleton, said that the review provided a detailed road map for service planning, improvement and prioritisation.

"We want to be a leader in rural mental health care. By following the review's recommendations, we will ensure that our models of care and services are in line with national and international best practice," Mr Eggleton said.

"Most importantly, the review has given us an opportunity to incorporate the knowledge and expertise of staff and independent clinicians and the diverse experiences of local consumers and community members in our service planning."

### Context

- SNSWLHD covers a large part of NSW, from Goulburn and Crookwell to the Victorian border, and surrounds the ACT on three sides. The review covered the District's community mental health teams at Goulburn, Queanbeyan/Yass, Cooma, Bega and

Eurobodalla. It will also include two inpatient rehabilitation units; the Bega Valley Mental Health Unit at South East Regional Hospital and the Ron Hemmings Centre at Kenmore Hospital, Goulburn.

**END**