

Needs of the mental health workforce ^(cont.)

A key issue for BCH and the mental health service system more broadly is growing the capacity to train, develop and support the mental health workforce. It is necessary to systematically engage, support and retain students and graduates from various mental health disciplines. A training provider is needed to support a lived-experience workforce. BCH has been developing a tailored six-month orientation package and supervision programs to ensure that our growing peer workforce continues to flourish.

BCH has mental health peer workers employed in Connecting2-community, Forensic Mental Health and counselling. We are expanding this approach to other mental health teams.

Responding to the policy environment

The *Australian Government Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report into Mental Health 2020* recognises the high level of unmet need for care and the potential social, economic and systemic benefits of improved community mental health through more effective prevention strategies, early intervention, better access to and experiences of care. The final report of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System is due in February 2021 and is anticipated to recommend significant transformation of Victoria's mental health system. BCH has made formal submissions to the Royal Commission and contributed to the development of the National Mental Health Plan.

These reform drivers occur in context of an already significantly changed and increasingly complex mental health service system. BCH plays a leadership role locally by bringing State and Commonwealth-funded providers together in a range of local partnerships to better describe and understand the local service system, eligibility criteria and referral pathways. BCH also participates in the leadership and delivery of Suicide-Prevention Place-Based Trials in partnership with Western Victoria Primary Health Network.

BCH actively participates in the governance and operation of the *Regional Mental Health Plan*.

Conclusion

BCH provides a diverse and effective range of mental health promotion, treatment and coordination services – all underpinned by an organisational ethos that is a well-rounded and recovery-oriented. All new and prospective services incorporate co-design processes and a lived-experience workforce wherever possible and practicable. Ballarat Community Health remains deeply committed to continuing to serve our community's mental health needs.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT: To the mental health of our community



COVER ART & INERIOR: *A Depiction of the Journey to Recovery From Addiction – The wall hanging pictured in this document was commissioned by Ballarat Community Health and was taken up by Envision where a team of craftspeople worked for six months to complete the project. The final design, by Teresa Kenny, is a 'Symbolic Landscape' that represents and facilitates discussion about recovering from addiction. Inspiration was taken from Ballarat Community Health, its gardens and surrounds.



Mental health services and Ballarat Community Health

Since the de-commissioning of psychiatric institutions in the 1990s, Ballarat Community Health (BCH) has provided mental health support and treatment services to the communities we serve. Our organisation's continued commitment to accessible, affordable and effective community care is summarised in this Statement. Work across the healthcare continuum BCH is a community health service dedicated to the social model of health and health equity. We provide a variety of services and interventions from community-level prevention and early intervention through to specialist mental health services and recovery support.

BCH is a leading and experienced health promotion advocate in the Central Highlands, providing a range of wellbeing programs that enhance social connectedness, reduce stigma and promote pathways to support. This includes programs targeting early years, schools and workplaces and activities specifically targeting youth mental health.

BCH's mental health model of care recognises that people are experts in their own lives and should play an active role in the decisions that shape their lives. Our recovery-oriented approach acknowledges that people can and do leave systems in order to live meaningful, self-determined lives. We provide a range of clinical treatment, counselling, psycho-social support and care coordination services for people across the age continuum. Many services are consortium-based, provided in partnership with other services. Our client needs vary according to each program, however a high degree of vulnerability, acuity and complex psycho-social need is common. Dual-diagnosis capability is an essential part of our service delivery. BCH's highly skilled and experienced mental health professionals work in multi-disciplinary teams including lived experience workers, a valued and emerging discipline in their own right.

BCH has invested in specialist mental health services for children, inc. paediatric and neuropsychological clinics and child counselling. This is in response to increased community need in this very vulnerable group.

Integrated care is essential, especially given the commonality of co-occurring physical health needs, substance use problems and family violence. BCH's person-centred services recognise each person's unique needs and offer flexibility, choice and control within their recovery pathway. BCH's Victorian government-funded services include:

- Generalist Counselling and Family Violence Counselling for adults and children
- Wilanila Barring (Grampians Forensic Mental Health in Community Health) – clinical treatment & recovery for Community Corrections clients with mental health needs.

BCH's Commonwealth government-funded services include:

- Continuity of Support - community based supports for people with severe mental illness and associated psychosocial functional impairment, who can't access NDIS
- Connecting2community – a co-designed support program staffed by Peer Workers, supporting people to connect to meaningful community activities
- headspace Ballarat – a range of mental health, primary health, vocational and social support services for young people aged 12-25 in Ballarat and surrounding areas
- HeadtoHelp –Ballarat-based mental health hub for people of all ages with moderate care needs to connect and integrate with the local service system
- NDIS Support Coordination - for people with an NDIS package who require support to implement it, including clients with a psychosocial disability
- STEPMI (Services and treatment for enduring and persistent mental illness) – clinical treatment and care coordination for people with severe and complex needs.

Creating a Mental Health Hub

BCH's Cooinda site in Wendouree is being redeveloped into a Mental Health Hub in response to increased community needs for readily available mental health care. It will provide assistance for people from a diverse range of ages and situations, including BCH services and pathways to external providers. The site is due to be completed in May 2021.

Ensuring the mental health of our workforce

The mental health and wellbeing of our staff is an integral part of our work. BCH is actively committed to a positive workforce culture and has consistently been rated as having a culture of success through independent surveys. BCH promotes diversity amongst our workforce and seeks to counteract discrimination. We are committed to remaining a values-based workplace and provide Employee Assistance, mental and physical health and wellbeing programs and family-friendly working conditions. A number of BCH staff are accredited Mental Health First Aid training providers.

Needs of the mental health workforce

The mental health system evolved around illness treatment and professional expertise; genuine mental health service system reform requires that users of the system have a voice in its re-design and delivery. BCH views the lived-experience workforce as an emerging discipline with specific training, knowledge and support needs – these are factored into our developing peer workforce orientation program. All BCH mental health peer staff have a minimum qualification of Certificate IV in Mental Health and demonstrated professional experience. Peer workers are a non-clinical service and a vital member of the therapeutic team as specialists in client engagement, motivation and role modelling a hopeful future.

In 2020, all BCH staff were awarded a half-day of Leave on RUOK? Day to focus on their wellbeing after the stresses of responding to COVID.



PICTURED: *A Depiction of the Journey to Recovery From Addiction