

National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce - Terms of Reference

Purpose of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce

The Taskforce's purpose is to oversee the development of a ten year National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.

It will advise the Commonwealth Department of Health and the National Mental Health Commission, who are jointly developing the Strategy.

Terms of Reference for the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce

The Taskforce will examine:

- Defining the mental health workforce, with respect to both settings and professions.
- Sustainability, supply, distribution and retention issues for the mental health workforce.
- The scopes of practice and structure of the mental health workforce across the service continuum.
- The training, support and the wellbeing of the mental health workforce, in the light of contemporary priorities such as suicide prevention and recovery-oriented care.
- The workforce's capability in providing telephone-based and digital services.
- The adequacy of data to inform workforce planning and development.
- Any matters reasonably relevant to the issues above, as determined by co-Chairs.

The Taskforce will:

- Recommend practical approaches that governments and other stakeholders can take to strengthen the workforce.
- Consider how to build a workforce that recognises and best utilises the skills and strengths of all workers, including peer workers, disability support workers, alcohol and other drug workers and carers.
- Develop advice that will clarify and enhance the role of various segments of the emerging workforce including but not limited to the peer workforce and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, health workers and mental health workers.
- Provide recommendations to improve the capability of, and support to, professions that provide support to people with mental illness as a secondary role such as first responders, educators, justice system staff and health professionals.
- Consider the application of trauma-informed care and practice at the organisational and individual practitioner level within mental health services.
- Address the need to build and retain a culturally responsive mental health workforce for populations whose health needs may not be met by mainstream services including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex (LGBTI+) people and communities.
- Work in the context of current mental health and broader government policy settings of relevance to the workforce. Alignment with The Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan is essential.

- Have regard to other workforce reports, strategies and inquiries, including jurisdictional mental health workforce strategies, in development or being implemented.
- Consider appropriate access to the mental health workforce for the specific needs of regional, rural, remote and very remote communities.
- Set targets to attract and retain workers, and establish a system to monitor and report progress in achieving targets.
- Provide recommendations on how to strengthen data on the mental health workforce.

Operation of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Taskforce

The Taskforce will be co-chaired by Jennifer Taylor PSM and Thomas Brideson. Membership of the Taskforce will be settled by the Minister for Health, in consultation with co-Chairs. Members will be drawn from the following professional groups:

- Professional and occupational peak bodies
- Provider peak bodies and representatives
- Consumers and Carers
- State/territory representation
- Education sector representation
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector representation
- Economics representatives

The Taskforce is expected to meet approximately nine times between January 2020 and June 2021. The Taskforce will provide initial recommendations to the Government by December 2020. A final report will be provided to Government by June 2021 prior to endorsement by the Australian Health Minister's Advisory Council.

The Taskforce, in consultation with the Department of Health, has the capacity to commission and consult experts, and engage in broad stakeholder and community consultation.

The Department of Health will provide the Secretariat for the Taskforce.