



## Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Minister for Health

Minister for Families and Community Services

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Member for Kurrajong

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Ms Joan Lipscombe  
Canberra Mental Health Forum  
[cmhfau@gmail.com](mailto:cmhfau@gmail.com)

Dear Ms Lipscombe

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2020 about pilot programs to meet the needs of people with mental illness and physical illness. I apologise for the significant delay in responding to you.

I note your reference to the ACT Auditor's General's Report 'Management of Care for People Living with Serious and Continuing Illness'. The ACT Government is committed to expanding and improving health services for people with chronic conditions, including those living with mental illness.

Specifically in response to your query about programs to improve the physical health of people with mental illness, the Canberra Health Services' Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol and Drugs Service (MHJHADS) have and are undertaking the below activities across their mental health services:

### **The Collaborative MHJHADS Metabolic Screening Physical Health Quality Improvement Program**

This initiative was rolled out across the AMHRU, Adult Mental Health Day Service and Mental Health Service – Intellectual Disability. Metabolic screening has been implemented in all teams.

### **Adult Mental Health Unit (AMHU)**

AMHU has had a dedicated focus on physical health from 2019-20. This includes improved physical assessments to identify and address well-recognised problems such as lack of exercise, poor nutrition, high rates of smoking/alcohol misuse, poor oral health, higher cholesterol levels and the severity of side effects of medications.

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ACT Legislative Assembly London Circuit, GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601

 +61 2 6205 2661

 [stephen-smith@act.gov.au](mailto:stephen-smith@act.gov.au)

 [@RachelSS\\_MLA](https://twitter.com/RachelSS_MLA)

 [rachelSSMLA](https://www.facebook.com/rachelSSMLA)

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## **Adult Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit (AMHRU)**

AMHRU has implemented a physical health initiative where on admission all clients are provided with:

- physical health screening by the nursing staff;
- physical health examination by the medical staff, including pathology (including blood glucose levels and cholesterol if not done within the last six months); and
- all consumers who smoke are offered the smoking cessation pathway and charted Nicotine Replacement Therapy by medical staff.

AMHRU has also introduced:

- an Oral Health Services program, where there is a weekly mobile dental clinic offered to all inpatients; and
- a dietician led self-catering model with the goal of improving dietary intake quality for inpatients.

## **Adult Mental Health Day Service**

The Adult Mental Health Day Service has introduced the role of MHJHADS dedicated Clozapine (psychiatric medication) Coordinator. This is a senior registered nurse whose primary duties include overall management of the Clozapine system, and whose role includes training for Clozapine clinic staff on complexities of persons on Clozapine and other issues such as alcohol and other drugs, physical health, side effects, medication interactions and ensuring all Clozapine clients are linked in with a General Practitioner (GP) for ongoing physical health care.

## **Older Person's Mental Health Service Physical Health Assessment Team**

The Physical Health Assessment Team was set up in 2019. By February 2020, 100 per cent of all clinically managed consumers were offered a physical health screen by Enrolled Nurses.

This program was paused from April to September 2020 after staff were redeployed over COVID-19 pressures, but the program recommenced in September 2020. Currently, 80 per cent of all cases managed by the Older Persons Mental Health Service have completed an annual Physical Health Screen.

## **The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

The CAMHS Specialist Youth Mental Health Outreach (SYMHO) service completes physical health screening upon entry to the service, three-monthly and at discharge. If more complex physical health concerns are identified, SYMHO consumers are referred to a CAMHS SYMHO Nurse or their GP for follow up.

Physical health screening commenced at CAMHS South on 15 October 2020. 100 per cent of CAMHS South clients are offered a physical health assessment. The physical health assessment will be implemented at CAMHS North as soon as possible.

## **City Adult Community Mental Health Team**

The City Adult Community Mental Health Team is piloting a Homelessness Outreach Team (HOT) for people experiencing mental illness and homelessness in the City region.

People who are homeless often experience a range of associated issues, including challenges with managing their physical health needs. Recognising this, as part of the suite of interventions offered by the HOT, the service will attempt to link these clients with appropriate physical health care, including GPs and other health professionals to address these issues.

## **Dhulwa Mental Health Unit**

Secure Inpatient Services employ several Allied Health staff to support and enable consumers to access physical activities. The service has a dedicated exercise physiologist who supports consumers to develop and maintain exercise plans during their stay.

Dhulwa is designed with a gymnasium, outdoor sports area, and walking track, which supports consumers to access physical activity. Bushwalks through the Mount Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve are also a regular part of the Dhulwa rehabilitation program.

A GP is provided one day per fortnight to support the physical healthcare needs of consumers within Dhulwa.

If you have further queries I would encourage you to contact Michael Culhane, Executive Group Manager Policy, Partnerships and Programs Division in the ACT Health Directorate at [Michael.culhane@act.gov.au](mailto:Michael.culhane@act.gov.au).

Thank you for writing to me on this important matter and I hope this information has been useful.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

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