

Thursday, 18 April 2019

## NWMPHN introduces pilot to provide Psychosocial Support Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in the City of Yarra and the City of Melbourne



North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) is collaborating with cohealth and Melbourne City Mission to implement a \$700k pilot to provide specialised support to people who are homeless living in Yarra and the City of Melbourne.

While the introduction of the NDIS will provide comprehensive and individualised support for people with disabling mental health illness, there is a cohort of people with severe mental health issues that will be ineligible for NDIS funding but will still require specialised, less intense psychosocial support.

The Psychosocial Support Services Homelessness (PSS-H) pilot commenced in April 2019 and will continue for 12 months. It will offer flexible support to people who may not be able to access the NDIS, however would still benefit greatly from an individualised approach to meeting their needs.

In simple terms, psychosocial supports may include, receiving practical help (daily living/tasks), being supported (mental health, physical health, education, work, housing, leisure), and getting connected (with others, family, friends, peers, community, mainstream supports, other services).

NWMPHN Deputy CEO Julie Borninkhof said that this program has come from the need to address gaps in support for people who are homeless.

“Data has indicated that one third of people who are homeless in Victoria are estimated to be residing within the NWMPHN catchment, with mental health issues being much higher in our homeless community than in the general population of Australia,” Julie Borninkhof said.

In recognition of the NDIS access difficulties for homeless people, NWMPHN approached agencies in the region to propose this pilot. Cohealth were nominated to focus on an adult population often residing in poor quality rooming houses and Melbourne City Mission will support young homeless people who are also struggling to cope with emerging mental health needs.

The teams will be based at various key locations in Yarra and the City to support these groups and find out how best to engage and support their needs.

Caz Healy, cohealth Lead Executive, Services, said that people experiencing homelessness are often unable to access services because of eligibility requirements and intake and assessment procedures can be complex which means people may not get the services they require.

“This pilot program will bring some relief in enabling cohealth’s frontline outreach workers to engage potential clients, rather than expecting them to jump through complex processes to access the services they need,” Caz Healy said.

This homelessness initiative is a component of the region wide psychosocial support services that are currently being planned and commissioned by NWMPHN.

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## ABOUT PHNs

Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, PHNs began operation on 1 July 2015 and are responsible for coordinating primary health care and facilitating improved health outcomes in their local community. Melbourne Primary Care Network operates the North Western Melbourne PHN.

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We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



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Page 2 of 2