
Appendix three – About the audit

Audit objective

This audit assessed the effectiveness of NSW Health's planning and coordination of mental health services and service pathways for Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

Audit criteria

We addressed the audit objective by answering the following questions and criteria:

1. Is NSW Health using evidence to plan and inform the availability of mental health services for Aboriginal people in New South Wales?
 - a) Mental health services are planned and established based on evidence that describes the mental health service requirements of Aboriginal people across New South Wales.
 - b) Models of mental health care are based on evidence and engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders.
2. Is NSW Health collaborating with partners to create accessible mental health care service pathways for Aboriginal people?
 - a) NSW Health forms partnerships with other mental health care providers to facilitate referral points and manage integrated pathways of mental health care.
 - b) NSW Health shares information with mental health care service partners and other stakeholders to ensure continuity of mental health care for Aboriginal people transitioning from one service to another.
3. Is NSW Health collaborating with partners to ensure the appropriateness and quality of mental health services for Aboriginal people?
 - a) NSW Health seeks and uses feedback from Aboriginal stakeholders to improve the quality and appropriateness of mental health services.
 - b) NSW Health implements the findings and recommendations of mental health inquiries and evaluations to improve Aboriginal mental health services.
 - c) NSW Health shares evidence-based approaches to Aboriginal mental health care with service providers.

Audit scope and focus

The audit focused on:

- all Local Health Districts, community and hospital based mental health services for children and adults
- NSW Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network including adult correctional environments, juvenile correctional environments, forensic mental health facilities
- treatment and services supporting comorbidities such as addiction where mental illness is a factor
- NSW Health monitoring systems, information, data, resources
- The NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2013-2023.

Audit exclusions

The audit did not assess:

- programs for non-Aboriginal mental health service users
- school-based mental health services and programs
- programs exclusively focused on addiction without a mental health component
- specialist aged-care or gerontology programs for age-related brain conditions
- programs or services funded solely by Commonwealth or non-government funding
- the merits of decisions made by Ministers or Cabinet.

Audit approach

Our procedures included:

1. interviewing staff from audited agencies including:
 - a) Ministry of Health
 - b) Local Health District executives and services staff
 - c) Justice Health executives and services staff
2. meeting with other organisations and services relevant to mental health, including:
 - a) Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
 - b) other non-government mental health and drug and alcohol service providers
3. reviewing documents relevant to mental health services, including:
 - a) Aboriginal Health Plan evaluations and progress
 - b) mental health service planning frameworks and funding guidelines
 - c) mental health service delivery protocols and policies
 - d) data on mental health service use in New South Wales.

The audit approach was complemented by quality assurance processes within the Audit Office to ensure compliance with professional standards.

Audit methodology

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements and other professional standards. The standards require the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided by the audited agencies throughout the audit. We acknowledge the contribution of Donna Stanley, the Aboriginal mental health consultant to this audit. Donna provided cultural advice, knowledge and expertise throughout the audit and facilitated a workshop of Aboriginal mental health and drug and alcohol stakeholders. We also thank all those from other NSW Government agencies and other stakeholders who met with us to discuss the audit.

Audit cost

The estimated cost of the audit, including travel and overheads, is \$520,000.