

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Latest report on mental health services finds room for improvement

A new report from the Bureau of Health Information highlights what matters most to mental health patients, and where improvements can be made. The report, *Patient Perspectives*, examines 5,000 survey responses from people using mental health services.

Bureau Chief Executive, Dr Jean-Frederic Levesque, said "The report provides valuable information for the NSW health system on what is done well, and what areas need improving."

Questions which scored well included; knowing who to call when help was needed, being treated with respect and dignity and not being talked about as if you weren't there.

Some areas for improvement are revealed in the lower scoring questions, which were; being able to refuse medication or treatment, being asked whether to include family and friends in treatment, and the provision of information about medication side effects and danger signals to watch for.

For community mental health, the report also looked at how patients felt after their treatment. "By measuring what matters most to patients, that is how well they are able to get on with their everyday life following treatment, we can identify what they need to achieve good health outcomes." explains Dr Levesque.

"The findings suggest that in order to positively influence patients' health, staff should be responsive to their needs, help to make arrangements for subsequent visits, provide support and reassurance about their ability to recover, and ensure good communication about treatment plans. When these things are done well, people are more likely to feel their treatment has improved their life."

Other key findings include:

- **Mental health patients are the least positive about their care.** This is compared to other surveyed NSW patient groups (e.g. outpatients, day only inpatients).
- **When compared internationally, results are similar.** There were similar patterns of results for NSW and England's National Health Service. This was the only other health service with comparable survey questions from mental health patients.
- **Aboriginal people were less positive about the care they received** compared to non-Aboriginal people. For inpatient care, 26% of Aboriginal people rated their care as poor, compared to 12% non-Aboriginal people. For users of community mental health services, 14% of Aboriginal people rated their care as poor compared to 7% non-Aboriginal people.

The report also assessed the variation in performance across the State, comparing Local Health Districts (LHDs), hospitals and community mental health facilities.

Dr Levesque said "There are some aspects of care that were rated more positively in some LHDs and hospitals than others, but overall most did not differ significantly from the NSW average."

The *Patient Perspectives* report is based on responses to the NSW Health Patient Survey 2010-11. The report looks at both inpatient care (specialised hospital care) and community mental health services.

The report is available at [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

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