

Secure Mental Health Unit Model of Care Summary

The ACT Government is embarking on a new health infrastructure project to build a Secure Mental Health Unit (SMHU). This facility will respond to the needs of mental health consumers who are or are likely to become involved with the criminal justice system (forensic) and for those civil consumers who cannot be treated in a less restrictive environment. The SMHU will form part of an integrated care pathway for those who need care and treatment as a result of their mental illness and associated co-morbidity.

The SMHU will be a purpose built, secure mental health facility located at Symonston. This site was chosen after extensive site investigations to determine the most appropriate location. The SMHU will be an integral part of Health services provided by the ACT Health Directorate. As part of Canberra Hospital and Health Services (CH&HS), the SMHU will be managed by the Justice Health Services program as part of the Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services Division.

The unit will have a 25 bed capacity and care for people with low to medium secure needs. The 25 beds will be configured into an acute wing and a rehabilitative wing. 10 beds will provide care for those who are acutely mentally unwell and 15 beds will be for rehabilitative care. The beds will be configured so as to allow the flexibility required to meet the diverse range of need. The aim of acute care will be short term care for assessment and stabilisation. The aim of the rehabilitative care will be community re-integration. The rehabilitation program will provide medium to longer term care.

Who will the SMHU provide services for?

The SMHU will provide a safe and structured environment with 24 hour clinical support for people with acute or persistent and severe mental illness with associated functional and behavioural difficulties requiring secure care. This will include both forensic consumers and consumers of general mental health services (civil). In exceptional circumstances, services may be provided, following specific consideration by the Chief Psychiatrist, to individuals under 18 years of age who cannot be safely managed in a less restrictive environment.

The presenting conditions for individuals admitted to the SMHU will consist mainly of moderate to severe mental illness. Most commonly the diagnoses will be schizophrenia and mood disorders with related psychosis. Individuals may also have complex presentations including mental illness and significant behavioural issues associated with personality disorder. Presentations often feature co-occurring drug and alcohol disorders, complex trauma and clinically significant impacts on psychosocial functioning.

More specifically, the SMHU is intended to focus on people with complex needs who are unable to be adequately treated in less restrictive settings or correctional settings, due to their mental illness and associated issues of behaviour and risks. This can include:

- Severely disorganised behaviour leading to difficulty in managing the activities of daily living
- Poor impulse control and judgement
- Ongoing risk of aggression and violence
- Significant risk of self harm and/or harm to others.

The key functions of the SMHU are the:

- Provision of secure mental health inpatient services 24 hours, 7 days a week in a specialised treatment and care environment, for people who are unable to be provided with clinical services in a less restrictive setting. This includes care for both forensic and civil consumers;
- Provision of contemporary, multi-disciplinary secure mental health rehabilitation services to assist people to recover from mental illness and to gain skills needed to live in a less restrictive setting.

The SMHU functions will support a person's treatment, care and recovery by:

- Assisting people to maintain hope and to support people's efforts in their recovery from mental illness
- Providing a safe and structured therapeutic environment for persons with persistent and disabling symptoms of mental illness
- Managing clinical risk and implementing behaviour management interventions
- Supporting individuals and their families and carers across the broad continuum of care, including facilitating a smooth transition of care to other teams/services.

The draft SMHU Model of Care (MoC) outlines the key motivators for the project including; how the unit will support the needs of those with culturally diverse backgrounds; how Aboriginal and Torres Islander people will be supported; the SMHU service scope; care delivery; the care delivery team; service partners and supports; and safety and security requirements. In developing this MoC, best practice guidelines and the clinical evidence base have been reviewed and incorporated into the description of the service model. Further, the document has been informed by clinicians, support staff, the input of interstate secure mental health specialists and the Adult Mental Health Unit Model of Care.