

Nganampa Health Council Mental Health Program

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Over the past five years Nganampa Health Council has delivered a Mental Health Program within a primary integrated health care model. The program focuses on the assessment, treatment and support of people with a major mental illness, concomitant substance misuse and social complexities. The Program is clinically focussed, providing crisis intervention, assessment and ongoing case management and support for Anangu with mental health problems including, psychosis, mood disorders, anxiety and suicidal ideation as well as offering appropriate referrals to external services such as drug and alcohol. The Program has significantly improved the Health Council's capacity to respond effectively during a mental health crisis and in improving the coordination and delivery of health care for mental health clients.

This work is coordinated by two Mental Health Nurses who work closely with our clinical staff and three visiting adult psychiatrists. During 2011/12, the Program provided services to 166 patients on 662 separate occasions. This included, for the first time, visits by a psychologist who performed cognitive assessments.

The Program continues to coordinate and support annual visits from the Guardianship Board of South Australia. This has significantly improved attendance by clients and their families at the hearing, with around 85% attendance during this year's visit.

A promising development has been the introduction of telemedicine equipment in our six major clinics. Although testing of this equipment suggests the technology has potential, our experience of successfully performing telemedicine consults is limited to date. The use of this technology will be reported on next year.

A relatively recent addition to the Alice Springs based workforce has been the employment of two social workers. An internal review of these positions was conducted during the past year, and noted significant benefits accrued from these positions for clients in facilitating the patient journey and providing a range of social welfare advocacy, liaison, referral and support. The review made recommendations about how the roles for these two positions could be better defined and differentiated and these recommendations are currently being implemented. One of these positions is a designated Mental Health Social Worker role and this position will be fully integrated into the work of the Program over the next twelve months.

