



The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Health

Mr Jim Simpson
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Our ref M23/556

Jim
Dear Mr Simpson

Thank you to you and your team for meeting with me in late January, and for writing about the commitments the Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) is seeking which relate to improving the health of people with intellectual disability in NSW.

I acknowledge CID is seeking more investment in skill development of NSW Health staff and for more NSW Health staff in the Intellectual Disability Health Service (IDHS) and in local health district mental health services. I appreciate your advocacy on this matter.

The NSW Government is committed to improving the health of people with intellectual disability. NSW Health will continue to work with partners, including CID, to identify and progress opportunities for additional investment and service development that enhances mainstream and specialised care for people with intellectual disability and their families.

Skill development in working with people with intellectual disability continues to be widely available to NSW Health staff, including through online training programs, as well as promotion of the Essentials and capacity building within each local health district by the Intellectual Disability Health Service. The Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI) continues to promote and develop the Essentials through forums, webinars, panels, newsletters and training throughout the health system and other external provider forums such as Primary Health Networks and disability service providers. Monitoring and improvement of the tool has been underway since 2019 including development of new resources for a broader audience. The next revision of the Essentials will be released this year.

The NSW Health Intellectual Disability Health Service (IDHS) works to build the skills, knowledge, confidence and experience of mainstream health staff in intellectual disability across NSW. The IDHS delivers capacity building activities in each local health district that align with local priorities and opportunities, leveraging existing disability or other related resources. The IDHS also promotes use of the Essentials by NSW Health staff.

There are also a number of projects underway to strengthen guidance for staff in working with people with disability including the development and launch of the new Disability Inclusion Action Plan by the end of 2023 and review of the Policy Directive Responding to Needs of People with Disability during Hospitalisation. Additionally I am pleased to note that four NSW hospitals are participating in the Disability Inclusive Practices in Health Project, which is designed to increase the disability inclusive practices of our health professionals through education and training designed and delivered by people with disability.

NSW Health recognises that there is a need for a periodic health review for a proportion of people with intellectual disability and complex health needs. The Ministry is working with key stakeholders, including Centre for Disability Studies (CDS), to develop a new service model for a cohort of people with intellectual disability with complex care needs, who are not currently well supported through general practice. The report from this project is due in early 2024. The CDS are funded

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until June 2024 to provide an assessment and referral service for people with intellectual disability with complex care needs, including periodic specialist clinical review, under a NSW Government grant. The final evaluation report from this project will be a valuable source of information on clients who have accessed periodic reviews.

NSW Health is also working to improve access, experience and outcomes of people with intellectual disability who need specialist mental health care by:

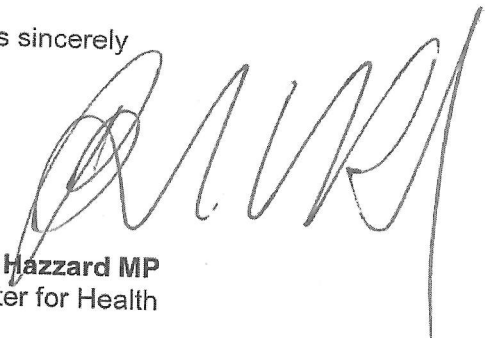
- Improving access to statewide specialist intellectual disability mental health hubs, the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Hub (SCHNMIHD) for children and the Statewide Intellectual Disability Mental Health Outreach Service for adults. The Hubs are able to provide brief advice to referring clinicians and brief clinical assessments or case reviews for complex mental health issues across NSW.
- Improving services in local health districts by providing access to dedicated mental health staff for intellectual disability. These positions support mainstream mental health staff in coordinating care for people with intellectual disability locally.
- Establishing a statewide network to build capacity within NSW Health services to better address the mental health needs of people with an intellectual disability (led by the Mental Health Branch).

A five-year statewide Intellectual Disability Mental Health Strategy is also being developed to improve access and quality of services for people with intellectual disability and their families. CID, together with a wide range of service providers, people with lived experience and their families have been consulted to inform the strategy, and I understand CID is a member of the Strategy Working Group overseeing this work. Thank you for your partnership in this project.

NSW Health is willing to explore employment of more psychiatrists with expertise in intellectual disability mental health. As discussed at our meeting, the availability of this workforce is limited and is a broader challenge that both state and Federal governments are currently working to address. I am assured NSW Health has taken your feedback about the importance of these roles in intellectual disability and mental health services on board.

Thank you again for writing. For more information, please contact Ms Sarah Morton, Director, Disability, Youth and Paediatric Health, Health and Social Policy Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, at sarah.morton2@health.nsw.gov.au or on 0436 668 540.

Yours sincerely



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