



**Mental Health Commission**  
of New South Wales

# **Mental Health Commission of NSW**

## **Agency Information Guide**

March 2017

## Agency Information Guide

The Mental Health Commission of NSW (Commission) is committed to ensuring that the people of NSW can access information about us easily and at the lowest reasonable cost.

This Agency Information Guide (AIG) is published in accordance with section 20 of the GIPA Act and provides a mechanism to make government information accessible, promote currency of information and appropriate release and support the management of government information as a strategic asset.

The purpose of this AIG is to provide general information on the:

- structure and functions of the Commission;
- ways in which the functions of the Commission, including the decision-making functions, affect members of the public;
- specific arrangements in place to enable members of the public to participate in the formulation of Commission policy and the exercise of Commission functions;
- kinds of government information held by the Commission;
- kinds of government information held by the Commission that we make publicly available;
- the manner in which the Commission makes or will make government information publicly available; and
- kinds of information that are (or will be) made publicly available free of charge and those kinds for which a charge is (or will be) imposed.

Where appropriate we have provided links to documents, reports, data and other information throughout this AIG.

This AIG is reviewed regularly and is available on the Commission corporate website at [nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au](http://nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au)

We value your feedback on this AIG to ensure that we achieve the highest levels of accessibility. You can provide feedback to us by phone to 9859 5200 or email to [mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au)

## About the Mental Health Commission of NSW

### About us

The Mental Health Commission of NSW was established in July 2012 under the *Mental Health Commission Act 2012* for the purpose of monitoring, reviewing and improving the NSW mental health system and the mental health and wellbeing of the people of NSW.

An effective mental health system requires a co-ordinated and integrated approach across all levels of government and the community-managed organisations responsible for health, housing, employment, education and justice. The Commission has a clear mandate to work across government and other service providers to drive reform across the mental

health sector. In doing so, the Commission will operate as a bridge between services to identify new ways they can work together to help people live well in the community.

### Our functions

The Commission works with Government and the community to secure better mental health and wellbeing for everyone in NSW, to prevent mental illness and to ensure the availability of appropriate supports in or close to home when people are unwell or at risk of becoming unwell.

The Commission's functions include:

- Advocating, educating and advising about positive change to mental health policy, practice and systems in order to support better responses to people who experience mental illness, and their families and carers.
- Partnering with community-managed organisations, academic institutions, professional groups or government agencies to support the development of better approaches to the provision of mental health services and improved community wellbeing, and promote their wide adoption.
- Monitoring and reviewing the current system of mental health supports and progress towards achieving the recommendations in *Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW: 2014-2024*, and providing this information to the community and the mental health sector in ways that encourage positive change.

More information on the functions of the Mental Health Commission of NSW is publicly available in the *About us* section of the Commission's website and is also contained in the *Annual Report*.

### Corporate functions and services

We have corporate functions and obligations that we are required to fulfil including the effective and efficient management of:

- finances
- staff
- procurement
- assets
- annual reporting
- information technology
- legislative compliance and internal audit

### Corporate governance

These functions are conferred on the Commission under a number of Acts. Some of the key Acts include:

- *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* – employment of staff
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* – publication of certain government information and granting access to other information
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* – standards and requirements for collection and use of personal information
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* – requirements for healthy and safe work practices

- *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* – management of injury and return to work
- *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984* – requirements for annual reporting
- *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* – management and administration of financial affairs
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994* – requirements for dealing with complaints under the Act
- *Independent Commission against Corruption Act 1988*

The Commission has a shared arrangement with the Department of Family and Community Services for some functions including human resources, payroll and financial reporting.

## Organisational structure

The Mental Health Commission of NSW is an independent statutory agency, created under the [Mental Health Commission Act 2012](#).

The current Commissioner, John Feneley, was appointed by the Governor of NSW on 1 July 2012 for a five-year term. The Commissioner is the agency head and reports to the NSW Minister for Mental Health.

There are six Deputy Commissioners who are appointed by the Governor of NSW and who support the Commission and the mental health community by speaking up about the issues that matter to people with a mental illness, their families and carers. The Commission's work will be informed by the diverse expertise of the Deputy Commissioners, and importantly by the insight of those of our Deputy Commissioners who have a lived experience of mental illness.

The senior executive team includes Julie Robotham in the role of Director, Strategic Operations and Communications, appointed in April 2016, and Catherine Lourey in the full-time role of Deputy Commissioner, appointed in May 2016.

The Mental Health Community Advisory Council ensures the Commission is connected to the experiences of people and communities across NSW. The Council has 18 members including the Commissioner and Chair. The Council advises the Commission on any mental health issue it considers appropriate or that is referred to it by the Commission. Members are appointed by the Minister for Mental Health to reflect the diversity of the NSW community.

Each year we report on our activities over the course of the year through an Annual Report, which is published on the Commission website.

A full copy of our organisation structure is available on the Commission's website.

## Contact details

- **Email us** at [mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au)
- Follow us on **Twitter**, **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **LinkedIn** and **YouTube**. See our Social media engagement policy for user guidelines as well as our privacy policy.
- **Call us** on **02 9859 5200** or **1300 884 563** (Call charges: 35c for calls from landlines in NSW, or a standard call charge from mobiles in NSW). Our office hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

- **Fax us** at 02 9859 5205
- **Write to us** at Locked Bag 5013 Gladesville NSW 1675

## How we engage with the public and our stakeholders

### Public participation

The Commission is committed to promoting public participation in the formulation of our policy advice to Government and in carrying out our other functions.

The Commission is guided by the lived experience of people with a mental illness and their families and carers in all that we do. The Commission regularly consults with its stakeholders, including members of the public, in the development of recommendations for policy and practice, and conducts community surveys on the progress of reform implementation. The Commission also holds regular meetings with stakeholders and members of the community in metropolitan and regional NSW in order to gather intelligence on current issues in mental health. See the Commission's Annual report for more information.

The Commission has a Community Advisory Council comprising members of the public.

There is also a Pharmacotherapy Advisory Group whose members include clinicians and academics as well as members of the public.

See also the Commission's Priority 2 projects, designed to improve the journey for people who use mental health supports and their families and carers, using their guidance to make it better.

### Channels of engagement

We engage with the public regularly through a number of electronic channels, to provide a fast and easy way for people to approach us and provide us with feedback.

When considering any consultation with the NSW community, we take into consideration what we are asking, why we are asking it, and who we want to ask. This informs which channel will be used to conduct the consultation or survey.

We use our website, Twitter, email groups and other communication channels to let people know when we are conducting public consultations. We provide people with the necessary information to understand the purpose of any consultation we do.

### Website

The Commission website is used to provide the public with resources and information about our functions and activities, submissions, events, policies, news and developments, and the work of our partner organisations. Members of the public can use the "Contact" section of the website to get in touch with us and provide feedback on our activities and functions. The website can be accessed at [nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au](http://nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au)

### Social media

Twitter: [@MHCNSW](https://twitter.com/MHCNSW)

Facebook: [@mhcnsw](https://www.facebook.com/mhcnsw)

Instagram: [livingwellnsw](#)

YouTube: [NSWMHCommission](#)

LinkedIn: [Mental Health Commission of New South Wales](#)

The Commission social media accounts are used to provide the public with instantaneous information about our latest news, publications, consultations, campaigns, and other areas of interest relating to the Commission. We also regularly share news and posts from other organisations and the media on mental health related topics. The Commission Twitter account is monitored during office hours. Members of the public can join the conversation, however we may not be able to respond individually to all the messages that we receive via Twitter.

The Commission LinkedIn account is used to promote and encourage connection with us by other organisations and individuals. Where possible we use this channel to promote recruitment, events and news.

See our [Social media engagement policy](#) for user guidelines as well as our [privacy policy](#).

### Surveys

We conduct surveys to obtain the views of our stakeholders to inform mental health reform progress reports and policy development. Survey results assist us to understand people's experience and awareness of mental health issues, key themes and trends. This information is used to inform the development of resources. We publish the results as part of reports which are published on the Commission website.

### Partnerships

The Commission partners with organisations that include people who have a lived experience of mental illness, and their families and carers, through consumer participation at all levels of planning, service delivery and policy development. It also partners with community and government groups that bring a regional or local collaboration focus to their work, because mental health reform needs to respond to specific needs in different areas of NSW. And it partners with organisations conducting research that can be translated readily into better practice.

The Commission works particularly closely with four key mental health organisations – beyondblue, Wayahead, Mental Health Carers NSW and Being – which it also funds. This support the engagement and empowerment of consumers, families and carers, ensuring these constituencies are authentically represented, in order to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people in NSW.

### Advisors

The Commission has a [Community Advisory Council](#) comprising members of the public who have a personal or professional interest in mental health and wellbeing. There is also a [Pharmacotherapy Advisory Group](#) whose members include clinicians, academics as well as members of the public.

## Feedback and complaints

The Commission does not provide mental health services to the community, nor does it have any separate complaints function. Nevertheless, many people contact the Commission via letter, email or its website contact form to share their experiences and perspectives. This correspondence ensures the Commission understands what is happening for people across NSW in their contact with the mental health system. For more information on correspondence received by the Commission, see the [2015-2016 Annual Report, page 35](#).

Where appropriate, Commission staff refer correspondents to the Health Care Complaints Commission or other agencies which have a complaints function.

On the Commission website 'Contact' page a number of channels are listed which people can use to contact the Commission, including an online feedback form.

## Information we hold

Information is contained in the following records held by the Commission:

- policy and planning documents
- documents on internal administration of the Commission
- documents concerning appointments to various official positions

In addition, the Commission also maintains the following categories of records:

- Minister's briefing papers
- correspondence with the Commonwealth
- correspondence with the other States and Territories
- correspondence with members of the public
- correspondence with Ministers and other Members of Parliament
- internal working papers of the Commission

## Open access information

Information which classified as open access information is information which we are required to make available. This information is made available unless it is not in the public interest to do so.

The Commission makes available, free of charge on the Commission website, the following open access information:

- The Commission's [Annual Report](#)
- All other documents and reports that are tabled in Parliament, including [Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW: 2014-2024](#)
- Details of significant government [contracts and tenders](#)
- Commission [policy documents](#)
- [Business Plan](#)
- [Disclosure log](#)
- [Contracts register](#)
- [Agency Information Guide](#)

## Pro-active release of information

The disclosure of proactive information by the Commission aims to assist the community with access to other government information that we hold that is not required by the GIPA Act to be disclosed as open access.

Currently, proactively released information by us includes:

- [Privacy policy](#)
- [Submissions](#)
- Business plan
- Commission internal operating policies

In addition, the Commission pro-actively makes available, free of charge on this website additional information including publications and resources as well as the Commission's monthly newsletter.

## Informal access

A request may be made at any time for other information held by the Commission. While the Commission reserves the right to require a formal access application to be made under the GIPA Act, the Commission will generally provide the following types of information in response to an informal request, without the need to make a formal access application:

- Copies of correspondence, where the person requesting the correspondence was the person who sent it to the Commission
- Documents that contain only personal information about a particular individual, and that is the person who is requesting the information
- Documents that have already been made public in some other way
- Other reasonable requests for information the release of which would not raise any potential concerns in terms of public interest considerations against disclosure.

The Commission reserves the right to impose conditions in relation to the use or disclosure of information that is released in response to an informal request.

## Formal access applications

Applicants who want to submit a formal access application can do so by contacting the Right to Information Officer.

To make a formal access application for information held by us, an access application must:

- be in writing and
  - sent by email to [mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au); or
  - sent by mail to Locked Bag 5013 Gladesville NSW 1675.
- clearly state that you are requesting information under the GIPA Act
- enclose the \$30 application fee
- provide a postal address for correspondence in connection with the application
- Include as much specific information as necessary to enable us to identify the information you are asking for.

If your application does not include these things, it will be invalid and will not be processed. If that happens, however, we will let you know and we will help you, if possible, by explaining how you can make a valid application.

The application fee for making an access application is \$30. Processing charges can also be imposed at the rate of \$30 per hour. In some circumstances an advance deposit can be required. We will let you know in writing if that applies to your application.

Certain discounts may apply, including on financial hardship and public interest grounds – for more details see the [Office of the Information Commissioner Fact Sheets](#).

See more information on [Formally applying for access](#) on the Commission website.

### Excluded information

An access application may be made for information held by the Commission - other than certain excluded information, set out below. Access applications are subject to application fees and processing charges in accordance with the GIPA Act.

Although an access application may be made for government information held by the Commission, the Commission will not release information if there is an overriding public interest against the disclosure of the information. Some of the particular information that the Commission cannot release in response to an access application includes:

- Cabinet information (as defined in item 2 of Schedule 1 of the GIPA Act)
- Executive Council information (as defined in item 3 of Schedule 1 of the GIPA Act)
- Documents that are subject to Parliamentary privilege, such as draft answers to Questions on Notice (item 4 of Schedule 1 of the GIPA Act)

Otherwise, the Commission will release information in response to a valid access application unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

### Disclosure log

The Commission maintains a [disclosure log](#) under section 25 of the GIPA Act which documents the information we release in response to access applications, and that may be of interest to members of the public.

### Right to Information Officer

The Commission's Right to Information Officer can be contacted by:

**Post: Locked Bag 5013 Gladesville NSW 1675**

**Email: [mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mhc@mhc.nsw.gov.au)**

**Phone: 9859 5200**

**Business hours: Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm**

The Commission can be contacted through the National Relay Service (NRS) on 133 677 for anyone with a hearing or speech impairment and through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 for anyone needing an interpreter.

## Document information

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