



June 2018

Frequently Asked Questions

Recovery Colleges in Western Australia

What is a Recovery College?

Recovery Colleges use inclusive educational approaches in a safe and welcoming environment to support personal recovery relating to mental health difficulties, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues.

In a Recovery College people with lived experience, carers, family members, those who work in the mental health and the AOD sectors, and interested community members come together to develop skills, and share knowledge and experiences in relation to health and wellbeing.

What does recovery mean?

It is acknowledged recovery is personal and means different things to different people. The culture and operation of Recovery Colleges is informed by the recovery approach. Recovery can be described as, “a process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential”¹. In regards to AOD use, recovery may or may not involve goals related to abstinence.

Recovery also involves people living a life where there is mutual exchange of contributions between the individual and their community.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration. (2011). *SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery* Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//PEP12-RECDEF/PEP12-RECDEF.pdf>

According to the National Mental Health Commission, recovery may be defined as, “A contributing life means a fulfilling life enriched with close connections to family and friends, and experiencing good health and wellbeing to allow those connections to be enjoyed. It means having something to do each day that provides meaning and purpose, whether this is a job, supporting others or volunteering. It means having a home and being free from financial stress and uncertainty. It means opportunities for education and good health care, all without experiencing discrimination...”²

What is co-production?

Recovery Colleges are based on co-production. Consumers, their families and carers, and those who work with them in health services and non-government organisations come together to share their expertise in all aspects of their design and operation from initial planning through decisions about operation and curriculum design through to the development of courses and workshops, delivery of training and quality assurance³.

² National Mental Health Commission. (2013). *National Contributing Life Survey*. Retrieved from <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/our-work/national-contributing-life-survey-project.aspx>

³ Perkins, R., Meddings, S., Williams, S, and Repper, J. (2018). *Recovery Colleges: 10 Years On. ImROC Briefing Papers*. Retrieved from <https://imroc.org/new-briefing-paper-recovery-colleges-10-years/>



The co-production of Recovery Colleges recognises those involved in the process as equal participants acknowledging the value of each contributor including their knowledge, skills and expertise of all involved.

Why is a Recovery College needed in our community?

With one in five Australians affected by a mental health disorder each year, access to appropriate community-based services that help people recover and to manage their mental health issues is essential.

In December 2015, the Mental Health Commission released the Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015–2025 (the Plan).

The Plan outlines the optimal mix and level of both mental health, and AOD services required to meet the needs of Western Australians. It also aims to address co-occurring mental health, and AOD problems.

The Plan has identified the need to develop and expand local recovery services that offer assistance and support to individuals to maintain personal recovery and live well in the community.

Where are Recovery Colleges currently operating in Australia?

Mind Australia initiated the Mind Recovery College™ (MRC) in 2013, the first of its kind in Australia. The MRC is modelled on earlier international initiatives from the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America. The MRC operates in Victoria out of its central Cheltenham campus and a number of satellite campuses across the state. It also has two locations in South Australia.

There are also Recovery Colleges in New South Wales including the South Eastern Sydney Recovery College and Western Sydney Recovery College, which deliver courses across a number of locations.

A similar service operates in Broome, Western Australia. The Broome Recovery College has been established by a group of people with lived experience and workers from Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service, Boab Health, headspace Broome, Men's Outreach Service, Kimberley Personnel, Helping Minds and Australian Red Cross. As with other Recovery Colleges, courses are co-produced by workers and people with lived experience of mental health difficulties, and issues with AOD.

What types of courses are offered Recovery Colleges?

All courses offered by a Recovery College are co-produced. This means that that are co-developed and co-facilitated by a service person with lived experience and a worker, and are generally open to anyone who is interested in attending including consumers, carers, friends, clinicians and community members.

Generally, courses offered through Recovery Colleges complement learning opportunities provided in the community.

Some examples of courses include:

- Relationships and communications: healthy relationships, assertiveness, anger management, parenting;
- Life skills: debt and finances, budgeting, job readiness;
- Learning about health issues: chronic pain, sleep, healthy lifestyle;
- Creative and Art classes: storytelling, art, poetry, drama, public speaking, painting;
- Coping skills: anxiety, grief, selfcare, dementia, relationship breakdown, shame;



- Mental wellbeing courses: selfcare, mood management, emotional wellbeing, taking positive risks;
- Carer: self care, chronic health, dementia, mental illness, workplace stress, social isolation, loneliness;
- Recovery concepts in major mental illness: improving function, improving quality of life, managing voices, understanding side-effects of medication, shared decision making, alternatives frameworks in mental health;
- adjusting to new environments: effects of migration, understanding stress, social isolation; and
- Alcohol and Other Drugs: use of alcohol, prescribed and illicit drugs.

Where will the new Recovery Colleges be located in Western Australia?

The exact locations will be determined through the development processes. However the State Government has identified Wanneroo and/or near Royal Perth Hospital as preferred locations as part of the 2017 election. Consideration will be given to various models including 'hub and spoke' delivery.

What is the WA Recovery College Expert Panel?

Through an open Expression of Interest (EOI) process conducted between December 2017 and March 2018, an Expert Panel has been appointed to oversee the co-design of the model of service in conjunction with the Mental Health Commission.

The development of the model of service will be undertaken through a process with a broad range of stakeholders including consumers, their families and carers, and those who work with them in health service providers and non-government organisations.

The Recovery College model of service will consider the provision of learning opportunities about recovery and wellbeing designed for: people with mental health, and co-occurring AOD issues, their families and carers; staff of mental health service providers; and staff and volunteers of non-government service providers.

The Expert Panel will consider key elements of the model of service including areas such as who the service is for, curriculum development, hours of operation, locations and how will the Recovery College be integrated with mental health and AOD services.

The Expert Panel consists of a range of individuals from many different backgrounds and is co-chaired Mr Joe Calleja and Ms Tandi Kuwana.

The Expert Panel have also designed the consultation processes. Through a co-design process, the Expert Panel will engage with consumers, their families and carers, and health workers, providing them the opportunity to be engaged during the design and development of services.

The Expert Panel will provide the Mental Health Commission with a final model of service by the end of September 2018.

What is a Model of Service?

A model of service broadly defines the preferred way services are to be delivered using international, national and local evidence-based best practice principles. They outline what a particular service type could offer (based on best practice), how the service could be configured, eligibility, length and frequency of services, roles and responsibilities of staff, consumers and carers.



What progress has been made to date?

In late 2015, the Mental Health Commission part funded the development of a Western Australian Recovery College Business Model, which was coordinated by the Western Australian Association for Mental Health (WAAMH), with the support of a number of non-government organisations. In 2016, the Recovery College of Western Australia Steering Group was independently formed to progress this work.

In the 2017-18 Budget, the State Government provided the Mental Health Commission with \$200,000, to develop a comprehensive, evidence-informed model of service for Western Australia, and business case. This will build upon the work undertaken to date and progress it to the stage of a full business case proposal that meets the requirements of the Budget process.

To support the Expert Panel the Mental Health Commission commissioned a literature review of a range of models, including the previous Business Model coordinated by WAAMH, to inform the development of a unique, evidence-informed model of service for Western Australia.

In addition, the Mental Health Commission also organised a series of information sessions about the general purpose and role of Recovery Colleges and about the planned process of co-designing the new model for Western Australia. These were held on 10 April 2018 and 11 April 2018.

The Expert Panel has sought Expressions of Interest through a grants process to conduct stakeholder and community consultation workshops, to explore key elements of a Western Australian Recovery

College Model of Service. The input from the workshops will assist in informing the Expert Panel in developing a model for Western Australia. The consultation process is expected to occur from 4 June 2018 to 22 June 2018.

Other consultation processes will include an online survey, written submissions and a telephone feedback line.

What is the role of the Mental Health Commission?

The Mental Health Commission is responsible for progressing the development of a comprehensive evidence-informed model of service for Recovery Colleges that addresses the particular needs of Western Australians who experience mental health and co-occurring AOD issues.

Once the co-designed model of service is developed by the Expert Panel, the Mental Health Commission will present a formal business case to Government as part of regular budgetary processes. This will enable thorough and informed consideration of funding and implementation by the State Government.

Who can I contact?

For more information or to provide input, you can contact the Mental Health Commission:

- By writing (GPO Box X2299 Perth Business Centre WA 6847);
- By emailing recoverycollege@mhc.wa.gov.au; or
- By phoning (08) 6553 0600.

Please visit the Mental Health Commission website at:

www.mhc.wa.gov.au/recoverycolleges for further information.