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QWS Consultation
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Via email: women@qld.gov.au

RE: Consultation for a new Queensland Women’s Strategy

Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (QAMH) is the peak body representing the Community Mental Wellbeing Sector in Queensland. QAMH advocates and supports member organisations to foster better outcomes for people experiencing mental health issues. We are committed to promoting the unique value the Community Mental Wellbeing Sector offers to the health care continuum within Queensland. QAMH is proud to work with its members and key partners, to influence system reform and enhance the contribution that the Community Mental Wellbeing Sector plays in people’s lives.

A note on language

QAMH intentionally refers to the community managed mental health sector as the Community Mental Wellbeing Sector to emphasise the unique contribution and preferred future direction of the sector as outlined in our [Wellbeing First Report](#). This includes non-government, not-for-profit community-based mental health organisations that provide psychosocial supports and access to natural supports in the community.

QAMH welcomes the development of a new Queensland Women’s Strategy and appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to the public consultation. It is crucial that the new Queensland Women’s Strategy continues to recognise women’s mental health and wellbeing as a key priority area and focus to improve the health and wellbeing of all women across Queensland. The need for this is well supported by the latest gender equality report card published by Queensland Government, which

highlights females were more likely to experience high to very high levels of psychosocial distress and anxiety related problems compared to males.¹

The pandemic has only further contributed to the inequality and challenges experienced by women and girls including workplace changes and job losses in female dominant industries leading to higher rates of anxiety and stress. Our recent advocacy work, in partnership with Q Shelter, has also revealed access to safe, supported and long-term housing for people with lived experience of mental illness is a key issue impacting women across Queensland - one that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Figures from the Australian Institute of Health Welfare (AIHW) on the delivery of specialist homelessness services nearly 14,000 clients in June 2021 in Queensland, reveal that 8,249 were female, of which 2,119 had a current mental health issue (compared to 1,276 male), and 2,979 have experienced family and domestic violence (compared to 1,031 male).²

The challenges and barriers impacting women and girls across Queensland are complex and intersectional, with access to appropriate mental health care identified as major issue by member organisations. Our current mental health service system is crisis-driven, designed to support those experiencing severe and complex mental health conditions. QAMH advocates for a shift in the way our sector tackles the current public mental health crisis, that is, actively supporting wellbeing rather than illness. Implementing the same approach in the new Queensland Women's Strategy is likely to have widespread benefits including building social, economic and political participation – all of which are key areas women currently experience gender inequality in Queensland.³ This will require collaboration and co-operation that extends beyond the work of Queensland Government. It will require prioritising opportunities to support and foster mental wellbeing and recognising the unique contribution of the Community Mental Wellbeing Sector.

QAMH supports the submission made by Women's Health Queensland, and echoes the call for the development of a Queensland Women's *Health Strategy* that aligns with the [National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030](#) and recognises mental health as a priority area for Queensland. Our call for a focus

¹ Queensland Government. (2020). *2020 Report card: Health and wellbeing*. [2020 Gender Equality Report Cards: Health and wellbeing \(publications.qld.gov.au\)](#)

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). *Specialist Homelessness Services: monthly data*. Cat no. HOU 321. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-monthly-data/contents/monthly-data>

³ Queensland Government. (2021). *Consultation for a new Queensland Women's Strategy Discussion Paper*. Queensland Government. <https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/consultation-women-strategy>

on mental health is well supported by recent survey data released by Women's Health Queensland which highlights mental health as the number one unmet health need for women across Queensland.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important strategy. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or have any questions.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Black

Chief Executive Officer