Far West Mental Health Recovery Centre: a partnership model of recovery focused mental health inpatient care

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Providing health care to scattered rural and remote communities is no walk in the park. Morbidity is high and clinicians are few. It can be hard to attract and keep enough clinicians to provide the services the community wants and needs.

This report discusses a cost effective model of mental health inpatient care that meets community need, solves patient flow issues, increases employment opportunities in rural and remote areas and eliminates the need for expensive, and often fruitless, recruitment campaigns.

It describes the partnership between Far West Local Health District (FWLHD) and Neami National, a Community Managed Organisation (CMO) in remote NSW to provide step-up, step-down sub-acute mental health inpatient care using a local workforce.

This paper provides background about the setting and service; details of the workforce model and evidence of the beneficial outcomes from the activity data.

The implications of the workforce model for cost effective care and sustainability in a rural location are discussed. The model: accesses a new type of health workforce that is readily available in every community; is less expensive to run than a hospital ward and it focuses on empowering the people who use the service to manage their own lives. This is a cost effective solution. Because the 10 bed Recovery Centre costs approximately $1m less to run each year than the 6 bed mental health inpatient unit it is sustainable. The implementation of this model opens the door to a different type of workforce that is available in every community and it is transferable to other locations. It offers mental health consumers hope and a chance to recover and manage their own lives.

This study is targeted towards health service managers and policy makers to facilitate context specific transferability.