

Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment: a case study

South East Sydney Local Health District

Physical Environment of an in-patient mental health unit

Kiloh is a mental health in-patient unit in Sydney providing care to approximately 45 people on either a high dependency or general ward. The management team felt the physical environment on the ward was having a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of staff and consumers and wanted to ensure that future capital service and refurbishment plans supported both physical and mental health.

“The mental wellbeing impact assessment provided a joint vision for our staff and consumers to co-design and implement a joint project enhancing our therapeutic environment” Mike Gatsi

Stakeholder focus groups were held with 23 consumers, carers and staff using the MWIA framework and a literature review undertaken.

What emerged was the how closely the physical therapeutic ward environments were linked, and how small changes can make a big difference.

“Examples include keeping the nurses station door open to reduce barriers to communication, improving daily living facilities to enable consumers to cook and prepare meals, reconfiguring the clinical environment so that consumers and staff eat together, developing and co-designing courtyard spaces, including



herb and vegetable gardens” explains Mike Gatsi, Service Director.

The impact assessment was also the catalyst for some changes to the non-physical environment for example consumers leading decision making in care and treatment supported by peer workers.

The assessment “informed the development of wellbeing interventions for our busy wards, led by our staff in making practical and concrete changes to our service. It has truly proven itself as a strong qualitative process which has made a difference”

Kiloh is using the recommendations from the MWIA to inform future refurbishment plans but Mike sees the value in applying the approach more broadly and is training his staff in the process.

We now intend to fully undertake the MWIA in all our clinical areas as an ongoing quality improvement strategy for our services.