

2026 LEADING REFORM SUMMIT

25 - 26 May 2026 | InterContinental Brisbane

POST EVENT REPORT



Queensland
Mental Health
Commission

Visit the
Summit
website



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Events like the Summit are the work of many people – thank you to all who have engaged with the Commission to deliver this year’s Summit and those who joined us and generously shared their insights, expertise and time.

It’s critical those with insights into the system, guide our path.

So we’d like to take this chance acknowledge those who have a lived-living experience of mental health challenges, alcohol and other drugs use, and suicide, including families, unpaid carers, kin and support people. We understand you have a fundamental role to play in reform, and we value your contribution.

We also acknowledge the professionalism, dedication and commitment of the mental health, alcohol and other drugs and suicide prevention workforces. We thank you for your efforts to improve the system and support better outcomes for all Queenslanders.

This year’s Summit took place on Turrbal and Yuggera lands and aligned with National Sorry Day – a poignant reminder of the strength, resilience, and courage of the Stolen Generations Survivors, and an opportunity to reflect on how each of us can play a meaningful role in the healing journey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this nation.

We recognise it is our collective effort and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of First Nations Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life and we walk together in our shared journey of reconciliation.

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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER



“Let us look back with respect, but also let us look forward with ambition and use these next two days to stretch our collective thinking, our collective responsibility, and our collective impact.”

The Leading Reform Summit is something we convene each year as reform requires collective action. It needs the momentum that comes from coming together, taking stock, listening carefully and asking whether our collective effort is focused on the outcomes that matter most to Queenslanders.

The Summit gives us a chance to step back from the pace of everyday work and understand the wider context. It connects people with lived-living experience of the system, people who lead and deliver services, people who fund, design and evaluate reform, but also people who work every day to improve the system.

The breadth of perspectives is what allows the Summit to do more than describe the system. It allows us to ask what needs to change, what needs to be strengthened, but also what are we prepared to do together to achieve change. **We can't leave it to one agency or one individual – we all have a role to play.**

Day 1 of the Summit was about considering where we are and what has been achieved. Day 2, we turned to implementation and heard what a future Queensland system must deliver for those who will experience it – young people.

The structure of these two days was intentional – the next decade will require us to be both practical but also bold. The Summit is not here to rehearse what we already know, it is to stretch our collective thinking. To be prepared to think beyond boundaries we often inherit, beyond programs, beyond portfolios and beyond annual cycles and crises as the organising centre for the system.

We have not solved everything in these two days, but we have aimed create shared clarity, deepen alignment, identify shifts that matter, strengthen relationships across the system and leave us with a clear sense of what each of us can contribute to the next phase of reform. Thank you for joining us.

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07 THE SUMMIT ON A PAGE

The Leading Reform Summit brings together leaders from mental health, alcohol and other drugs, suicide prevention, government, community organisations, research, lived and living experience, and service providers.

It aims to align leaders around the reform agenda, share evidence and new ideas, strengthen collaboration and translate policy into action that improves outcomes for Queenslanders.

This year's key theme focused '**looking back, looking forward**' – reflecting on progress made, challenges and learnings and focusing on what is needed to achieve future reform.

THIS YEAR'S PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Day 1 - Understanding the reform landscape

- *Opened with Welcome to Country and lived-living experience perspectives.*
- *Keynotes from the Health and Ambulance Minister, the Commissioner, Productivity Commission and Queensland Audit Office.*
- *Panels on:*
 - *Queensland's reform landscape.*
 - *Designing systems around people, place and partnerships.*
- *Future-focused presentations exploring what a wellbeing-centred system could look like.*
- *Commissioning Under Pressure reform simulation.*
- *Lifetime Achievement Awards and innovation showcases throughout the day.*

Day 2 - Turning reform into action

- *Began with an acknowledgement of National Sorry Day.*
- *Breakfast keynote with Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman and outgoing Commissioner Ivan Frkovic.*
- *Sessions on:*
 - *Funding as a driver of reform.*
 - *Scaling evidence-based mental health care.*
 - *Young people's vision for Queensland's future system.*
- *Three practical Reform Labs focused on:*
 - *Data, outcomes and accountability.*
 - *Governance and stewardship.*
 - *Workforce and community capability.*
- *Closing reflections from lived experience leaders and the Commissioner, followed by acknowledgement of the outgoing Commissioner.*

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SUMMIT SPEAKERS

REFORM LANDSCAPE



MICHELLE SANDERS & CRAIG WORLAND

Grounded the Summit in lived-living experience providing opening and closing remarks.



HON. TIM NICHOLLS

The Minister for Health and Ambulance Services spoke on the Queensland Government's reform vision.



SELWYN BUTTON

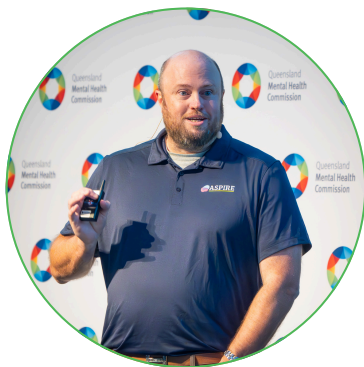
Presented on the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement Review findings and opportunities.



DARREN BROWN

Days after release, presented on the Queensland Audit Office's review of the mental health levy.

WHAT IF WE STARTED FROM WELLBEING?



PROFESSOR JR BAKER

Gave insight into the value of social prescribing models and it's role in reform.



DR KATHERINE TREBECK

Delivered a presentation on wellbeing economies and the commercial determinants.



DR JOEP VAN AGTEREN

Presented on the work of Be Well Co. and addressing languishing.



TANJA HIRVONEN

Spoke about the work of Thrilli, social and emotional wellbeing and listening to First Nations knowledge.

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SUMMIT SPEAKERS

KEYNOTES



**DR JEFFREY
BRAITHWAITE**

Presented on implementing evidence based care at scale.



GEORGIE HARMAN AO

Joined us early to speak on the challenges, strengths and future focus for Beyond Blue.



DR STEPHEN DUCKETT

Looked back and looked forward on the role of funding in driving reform.

OUR PANELS



**THE 2026 REFORM
LANDSCAPE**

- Dr John Reilly
- Mary Williams
- Chloe Jesson
- Lisa Gott
- Dr Jeremy Hayllar
- Jordan Frith



**SYSTEM DESIGN:
PEOPLE, PLACES &
PARTNERSHIPS**

- Fiona Caniglia
- Genevieve Sinclair
- Sue Andrews
- Sarah Haigh
- Donata Sackey
- Sue Goodwin



**YOUNG PEOPLES
VOICES: WHAT A
FUTURE SYSTEM MUST
DELIVER**

- Miles Britton
- Abi Cooper
- Bengallah Wright
- Abigael Hunt
- Akanksha Sharma
- Luke Twyford



**COMMISSIONING
UNDER PRESSURE -
REFORM SIMULATION**

- Dr Katherine Trebeck
- Dr Jeop van Agteren
- Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite
- Tanja Hirvonen
- Anna Daghish
- Bronwen Edwards

07 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Across the presentations and discussions, several consistent themes emerged. The Summit focused on recognising the evidence is already available and shifting attention towards robust implementation, stronger governance and rethinking how the system is designed.

What we heard:

IMPLEMENTATION MATTERS

We know what works, the evidence, the frameworks and the strategies – the challenge is implementation. The focus moving forward needs to be changing how the system operates (including looking at governance, outcome measurement, data, and how we use funding) not increasing investment.

WE MUST SHIFT FROM CRISIS RESPONSES

The system is weighted towards crisis responses but we must balance investment with prevention, early intervention, community based and psychosocial supports and address the broader determinants of health. While crisis services are essential, reform demands we invest in the conditions that support wellbeing and address challenges earlier.

LIVED-LIVING EXPERIENCE & COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE

Significant progress in embedding lived-living expertise across policy and services has been achieved – but there is still work to do to ensure their is genuine shared leadership, governance and decision-making. Communities, particularly First Nations communities and young people must have a central role in system design and local solutions.

WE MUST ADDRESS THE BROADER DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

Mental health and wellbeing are shaped by many factors outside the health system such as housing, employment, education, environment, stigma, financial stability – and therefore improving mental health outcomes cannot be the job of the health system alone. We must work across sectors and across the broader determinants (and across the commercial determinants) of health.

ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS THAT PRIORITISE PEOPLE

We must design around people, place and partnership rather than organisational constraints or programs. Flexible funding, culturally safe services, strengthened workforces, social prescribing all have a role to play. Services need to be easier to navigate and adapt to community need.

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REFORM LABS

Participants explored critical enablers of a wellbeing-centred, community-anchored system across three areas.

REFORM LAB 1: DATA, OUTCOMES & ACCOUNTABILITY

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Participants highlighted the challenge of defining meaningful outcomes, noting current measures focus too heavily on activity over impact. There was strong support for holistic, person-centred outcomes, improved data sharing across portfolios, and stronger collective accountability.

KEY THEMES

- **Reframing outcomes:** Broader measures including wellbeing, the determinants of health, and lived-living experience. Indicators included reduced hospital use and crisis responses, alongside better service experiences. Qualitative data and consumer voice were seen as critical.
- **Data integration:** Need for cross-sector data sharing (health, housing, education, justice), with focus on access pathways, engagement, transitions, and validated wellbeing measures.
- **Accountability:** Shift from blame to shared responsibility, with greater transparency, use of existing feedback tools, and continuous improvement.

REFORM LAB 2: GOVERNANCE & STEWARDSHIP ACROSS SYSTEMS

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Participants called for more aligned and transparent governance, with stronger community-led decision-making and embedded lived-living experience leadership. Greater collaboration across sectors and levels of government was seen as essential.

KEY THEMES

- **System alignment:** Move from compliance to outcomes-focused accountability, with stronger cross-sector governance and clearer collaboration structures.
- **Collective leadership:** Inclusive, multidisciplinary leadership models with equal voice, supporting peer-led and community-led approaches.
- **Clarifying roles:** Clear responsibilities across levels: local (community-led decisions), state (coordination and oversight), and national (equity and frameworks)—with greater decentralisation.

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REFORM LABS

REFORM LAB 3: WORKFORCE & COMMUNITY
CAPABILITY

SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Participants identified the need for a sustainable, diverse and culturally capable workforce, supported by strong community partnerships. Expanding peer leadership and balancing current pressures with future workforce development were key priorities.

KEY THEMES

- **Workforce capability:** Emphasis on integrated practice, transferable skills, system navigation, and improved training, supervision and wellbeing supports. Workforce shortages and retention issues remain significant challenges.
- **Peer leadership and cultural capability:** Strong support for expanding lived-living experience roles, embedding co-design, and moving from cultural awareness to cultural responsiveness.
- **Future capability:** A dual focus on immediate workforce needs and long-term development, including education pathways, innovation, flexible work models, and improved workforce attraction and retention.

CROSS-LAB INSIGHTS

Across all three Reform Labs, several consistent themes emerged:

- **Integration across systems:** Strong need for coordination across health, housing, education, justice, and community sectors
- **Shared accountability:** Moving from siloed responsibility to collective ownership of outcomes
- **Lived-living experience leadership:** Embedding peer voices in design, delivery, and governance
- **Local empowerment:** Enabling community-led solutions with appropriate funding and authority
- **Balancing short and long-term reform:** Addressing immediate pressures while building sustainable system capability

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AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Lifetime Achievement Awards are to recognise Queenslanders who have had lifetime careers in the mental health, alcohol and other drugs, or suicide prevention sectors, demonstrating leadership and significant contribution to reform.

These awards are presented annually at our Leading Reform Summit and are open to nomination from the sector and the community.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS



DR PEGGY BROWN AO

PROF. MARILYN
CAMPBELL

SANDRA EYRE

FIONA
HARRINGTON

DR JEREMY HAYLLAR



AMANDA HENDREN



TANJA HIRVONEN

LARRY STAPLETON
OAM

DR STEPHEN STATHIS



KARYN WALSH

EMERGING LEADER AWARD RECIPIENT

DR TIMOTHY
PIATKOWSKI

In addition to the Lifetime Achievement Awards, this year the Commission will also award the Emerging Leader Award.

To recognise an individual who is at an early or mid-career stage and is already demonstrating strong leadership potential, influence, and commitment to improving outcomes in mental health and wellbeing, alcohol and other drugs and/or suicide prevention in Queensland.

Learn more
on the
recipients



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RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS

PRESENTATIONS & PHOTOS

Presentations and recordings are available via **the Summit website**. Photos are also available via the **online photo gallery**.

SUPPORT SERVICES

We recognise that some of the information discussed at the Summit and talking and thinking about mental ill-health, alcohol and other drug use, and suicide can be distressing. Help is always available. A list of support services are available via the **Commission's website**.

THE NEXT LEADING REFORM SUMMIT

We will now be taking some time to reflect on the Summit and consider our plans for next year. Further updates on future Summits will be shared on our **website** and social media channels in due time. However, you are welcome to get in contact with us any time via **summit@qmhc.qld.gov.au** with any questions, thoughts or even potential speakers.

