

**Submission  
No 44**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF  
HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY  
GROWTH REGION**

**Organisation:** GROW Australia

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**Parliament of New South Wales  
Legislative Council  
Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health**

## **Current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region**

**Submission by GROW**

**Date: 27 May 2020**

**For further information contact:**

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## Summary

*“...this report, indeed I would argue any report, simply cannot capture the utter misery, dysfunction, violence, humiliation, brokenness, despair and in far too many cases, the tragic loss of life caused by alcohol and drug addiction.” Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC., Chair, Health and Community Services Committee, Report on Provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales.<sup>1</sup>*

GROW Australia would go one step further, and suggest that, from our experience, people with a dual diagnosis – mental ill-health AND alcohol and drug addiction – are at even greater risk.

GROW has been successfully providing residential rehabilitation services to people with a dual diagnosis in South West Sydney (SWS) for more than 30 years. Ironically, the very population growth and new suburbs in the SWS Growth Region which this Inquiry is examining poses a threat to the continuation of those services – this at a time when our services already cannot meet demand and where with population growth that demand is going to skyrocket.

This is because our residential rehabilitation service is located on a small farm at West Hoxton in the growth corridor and a site use change is currently being considered for that land which would require GROW to relocate. While the Western Sydney Parklands Trust has very generously committed to providing us with an alternative site, as a small community organisation GROW does not have the capital to invest in new buildings.

GROW therefore is seeking the support of this Inquiry for:

- (a) NSW Government commitment of capital to build a new GROW dual diagnosis Residential Rehabilitation facility on a greenfields site in SWS; and
- (b) Expand the capacity of the new facility from its current 17 places to a minimum of 30 places to better meet future demand, with related increases in recurrent funding.

Should current circumstances change and it becomes possible during the course of this Inquiry, GROW would be delighted to host a visit of the Committee, or a delegation of the Committee, to the West Hoxton site to enable Members to gain a better understanding of the work we do, the clients we serve and the challenges we face. We also would be keen to participate in any public hearings (recognising that due to the pandemic none are planned at this stage).

## Introduction

This submission will demonstrate the current intrinsic value of the GROW Residential Community and ongoing future need for this service in the vibrant and growing region of South West Sydney (SWS).

For more than 60 years GROW has been delivering compassionate and life affirming support to those experiencing mental ill health. We were pioneers in the lived experience movement and early initiators of the development of the Recovery Model for mental illness. As a national organisation we provide our programs across Australia with support from all state and territory governments.

One of our standout service offerings is our GROW Rehabilitation Program which we run out of the GROW Residential Community at West Hoxton. This unique facility successfully provides structured

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<sup>1</sup> Provision of drug rehabilitation services in regional, rural and remote New South Wales / Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health and Community Services [Sydney, N.S.W.]: August 2018.

recovery and rehabilitation services to individuals first and foremost with mental health issues and further services if an individual presents with the co-morbidity of alcohol and drug addiction, or dual diagnosis as it is known. We have been situated in Hoxton Park NSW within the South West Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) for more than 30 years. We are a highly valued member of the local landscape delivering services based on peer led support groups and residential rehabilitation services for both recovery from and prevention of mental illness.

The GROW Residential Community offers a safe space where people can recover both their mental and physical health, their belief in their own personal value, go through drug referral, learn to live in community with others and establish habits that will support their transition to a full and purposeful life.

The GROW Program is the foundation of all that occurs in the GROW Residential Community. The commitment of our staff and the lived experiences of Residents and Growers are the key resources that demonstrate the GROW Program philosophy. All the daily activities are designed to activate the proven features of recovery as developed for more than 60 years.

### **Scope**

This submission is driven by our desire to continue our work in the SWS region and more importantly address the growing demand for our services in the immediate area.

GROW understands that communities evolve and with that comes progress and development. With the inevitability that the Western Sydney Aerotropolis requires major infrastructure changes and residential developments to support the projected population growth, we have been informed by the Western Sydney Parklands Trust our current landlord of the GROW Residential Community that we are likely to need to relocate our rehabilitation operation.

Although they have assured GROW that as part of their future community facilities planning they will find us an alternative location, we will be faced with an empty block of land with no infrastructure where we have to source funding and manage construction.

As you would be aware like most NFP we run very lean, focusing on GROW residents and recoveries but we do not have the capacity for major capital works development.

As part of your future planning for health services in the SWS growth region we request that you acknowledge the significant work the GROW Residential Community has contributed to the stability, health and wellbeing of the region. We want to continue our services and need government support to secure funding for the construction of a new facility to accommodate and continue to bring hope to many broken individuals.

You have rightly identified in your Terms of Reference that an investigation into the current availability and shortfall of mental health services is an area of concern to address in future planning.

Further our services fall into the category of preventive health strategies, and the following section will demonstrate their effectiveness plus how they support and influence positive clinical outcomes for residents.

The following analysis will validate the value and contribution of our organisation and the necessity to continue our footprint in the SWS catchment.

### **GROW Residential Rehabilitation Program – Current Services and Outcomes**

GROW Residential Rehabilitation Program is one of two alcohol and other drugs (AOD) programs in SWS but is the only organisation providing for dual diagnosis of mental health and AOD residential programs.

While demand for dual diagnosis services is high, the dual diagnosis population is poorly serviced because many residential rehabilitation services focus on either mental ill-health or AOD – not on both. Separately, both mental health and AOD rehabilitation services are dealing with high needs populations – when mental ill-health and AOD are combined, those needs are even higher, and far more complicated.

The GROW Residential Rehabilitation program has been successfully providing a structured rehabilitation service for people with coexisting drug, alcohol, and mental health issues for more than 30 years, with residents staying for up to one year.

Over the past 12 months, the GROW Residential Program has had more than 520 people make contact about entering the program. We have 15 on the waiting list who have paid the application fee (prior to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown) and more than 100 others have registered their interest since March. The program occupancy is at 85% and 73 residents have entered the program since 1 July 2019.

The long stay necessitated for effective rehabilitation and recovery, coupled with the high numbers of people seeking support, means that GROW is not able to meet existing demand, let alone growing demand.

Over the years GROW has helped thousands of Australians recover from addiction and severe mental illness through a unique 12 Step Program of mutual support and personal development. The service model enables GROW to identify areas of need and improvement, which in turn assists in providing an effective program to combat mental health issues, as well as drug and/or alcohol addiction.

The GROW Residential Program utilises the Therapeutic Community model of treatment – helping clients help themselves and each other. There is a focus on the whole person and overall positive lifestyle changes through activities, interaction, education, and participation. The program treats individuals with personalised support by adopting a holistic and stepped care approach towards recovery. The prime focus of the program is for individuals to beat an addiction and work through mental illness in the long term supported residential setting.

SWS has a rapidly increasing population. There are currently more than 1 million people and it is anticipated that this number will grow by at least 10% in the next 5 years and be over 1.28 million by 2031. The 2019 Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) population projections predict significant growth in south western Sydney over the 15 years between 2016 and 2031, with Liverpool LGA alone, where our community is located, predicted to grow by an additional 116,465 people or an increase of 55%. Yet the very specialised nature of what GROW does means that GROW's catchment goes well beyond Liverpool, with referrals coming from a wide range of hospitals, including Nepean, Bankstown-Lidcombe and Campbelltown hospitals, and from other services.

In 2016, it was estimated that 110,193 people in South West Sydney used illicit drugs. It is predicted that this will increase by 29% to 141,673 people in 2031.

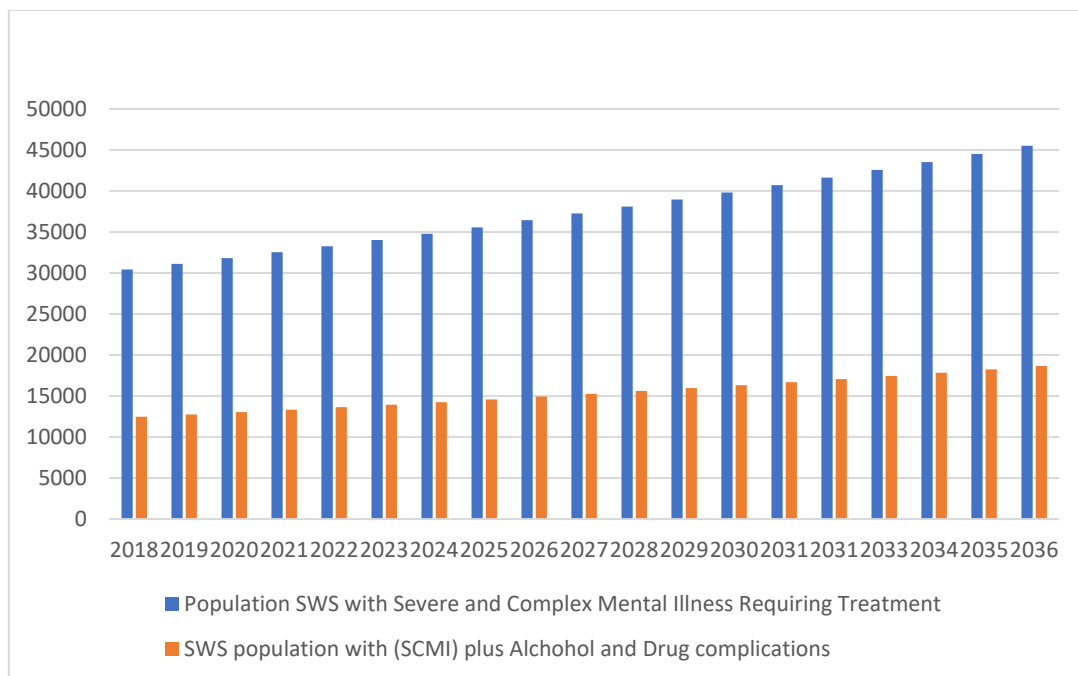
According to the National Mental Health Survey (NMHS) approximately 45% of Australians aged 16-85 will experience mental illness in their lives. It is estimated that more than 395,000 people in

South West Sydney have various levels of mental illness with more than 169,000 of these people with mental illness requiring treatment ((SWSPHN), July 2019) .

The SWSLHD and South Western Sydney Primary Health Network (SWSPHN) have developed an in-depth health needs analysis of the population both currently and future demand ((SWSPHN), July 2019). The number of suicide deaths in SWS in 2015 was the second highest reported in metropolitan Sydney after Western Sydney.

The following graph demonstrates the prevalence of mental health issues over the next couple of decades. GROW operates 17 beds to support acute cases presenting with a dual diagnosis of mental health and AOD complications however after 2021 without funding for continued services, the provision of beds will be zero. We recommend that any future development considers minimum 30 beds to cope with the increased demand.

***Increase in SWS population with mental health issues annually up to 2036.***



With the dynamics of a growing population, the socio-economic disadvantage of this region, coupled with elevated rates of tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet, the SWS region will see a significant increase in demand for GROW’s Residential Rehabilitation Program. We need to act in a timely manner to secure our current service on another site and allow for a doubling of bed numbers so we can continue to provide recovery and hope to SWS individuals.

**GROW Residential Community – Future needs**

The direct correlation between population growth and an increase in mental ill health highlights the demand for effective and proven programs like the GROW Residential Rehabilitation Program. When the time comes for us to exit our current premises it is in the best interest of government, council and community to support the longevity of our service delivery in the SWS region. We are currently at risk of closure without capital cost investment strategies for a future centre. This would highlight a loss and resulting lack of comparable services in this corridor.

However, with appropriate capital investment, we can meet the needs. We propose a 30-bed facility to meet projected demand. It will cost approximately \$6.03m to build this facility (Krivaneck, June

2016), with annual recurrent costs estimated at \$1.75m – a relatively small price in the overall costs facing SWS infrastructure and service expansion, and for a service which fulfills a vital role for the community.

### **Conclusion**

Government need to consider that securing the future service delivery of GROW in the SWS region, will result in increased wellness in the greater community, more resilient and hopeful individuals, an increase in employment and contribute positively to a compassionate and inclusive organisation representing the marginalised and unsupported.

If individuals with mental ill health and addiction are left unattended to find their own paths to recovery this could lead to further and more exacerbated mental ill health, social unrest and financial disadvantage.

Through the funding of a new \$6.03m facility for the Grow Rehabilitation Community and the associated programs, and with annual recurrent funding of \$1.75m, NSW would be committing to providing a strong backbone of support based on intervention and prevention in order to decrease the negative effects of mental ill health on disrupting communities.

### **References**

South West Sydney: Our Health – An in-depth study of the health of the population now and into the Future NSW Govt PHN South West Sydney,

<https://www.swslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/SWS%20Our%20Health%20in%20depth.pdf#page10>