

Submission
No 79

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: Endeavour Mental Health Recovery Clubhouse

Date Received: 6 September 2023

Submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care in New South Wales

This submission is confined to addressing points (b), (c) and (d) in the terms of reference:

(b) navigation of outpatient and community mental health services from the perspectives of patients and carers

(c) the capacity of State and other community mental health services, including in rural, regional and remote New South Wales; and

(d) integration between physical and mental health services, and between mental health service.

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1. Executive summary

Endeavour Mental Health Recovery Clubhouse (Endeavour) provides a high quality, centre based, mental health recovery program for adults experiencing the negative social and vocational impact of mental illness in their own lives.

Located in Port Macquarie this program has been in operation since 2015 and owes its success to the unique model of Members (elsewhere known as clients) working with their peers and staff on the day to day activities at Clubhouse that promote their recovery.

Strongly supported by our local community we collaborate with TAFE, Charles Sturt University, the mental health service of the Mid North Coast Local Health District, the North Coast Primary Health Network, the Mid North Coast Community College, Lifeline, New Horizons, the NSW Mental Health Commission, OSTARA. etc.

Up to 30 June 2023 Endeavour was financed by a blend of NSW government funding together with service provision to Members with an NDIS plan. Currently we receive no NSW government funding. This has meant that to make up that shortfall we are relying on community based fund raising, ad hoc small grants and drawing on cash reserves.

There are two other mental health recovery services in NSW using the Clubhouse name that receive ongoing funding from the NSW government. We argue that Endeavour should be funded on a similar basis, subject to meeting agreed service provision goals.

We also argue that the NSW Ministry for Mental Health work with the Local Health Districts to establish ways to promote and fund Clubhouses in other regional areas where access to services is limited.



2. Who we are and what we do

Endeavour Mental Health Recovery Clubhouse (Endeavour) is a unique, independent, not-for-profit, centre based organisation in Port Macquarie. In operation since 2015 we provide pathways to recovery for adults who have experienced the social and vocational damage that mental health problems can cause.

Unique – Members (known as clients in most other services) work together with staff on the Member’s recovery pathway.

Clubhouse – “belongs” to the Members – it is their safe place amongst peers and staff with lived experience. They are treated with respect and dignity, not as a number in a system. As individuals they highly value being treated, not as their illness, but as themselves. Every member is encouraged to contribute to the functioning of Clubhouse and members work together to achieve this.

Recovery – mental illness does not have to be a lifelong sentence. Diagnosis is useful in understanding the cause of a person’s challenges but it does not provide a road map of how to go forward. The recovery paradigm presupposes that recovery is possible on many domains of the person’s experiences and that the individual is the best guide to which domain(s) to attend to at any point of time.

Independent not-for-profit – we are an ACNC incorporated organisation registered as a charity with DGR status and governed by a skills-based board.

See more at: <https://endeavourclubhouse.com.au/who-we-are/>

How we work

Becoming a Member at Endeavour does not require a medical referral. However, some referrals are from local GPs, NDIS providers, other community agencies, family or friends and some are literally walk ins off the street.

We work in collaboration with the local Mental Health Service - our staff regularly attend the inpatient unit at Port Macquarie Base Hospital and meet with potential members who are then invited to visit Endeavour prior to discharge.

Members and staff have regular “house” meetings where programming, day to day operations, outings etc are discussed and decisions made. Staff have their own workstations in the open plan area – this sends a very clear message that members and staff work together.



Morning tea and lunch are produced by staff working with members in our commercial grade kitchen. An onsite vegetable garden contributes to the produce used.

Members are free to participate as much or as little as they wish although they are encouraged by staff and their peers to become increasingly engaged.

We have strong links with TAFE and Charles Sturt University both of which use Endeavour for student placements. On the flip side we benefit from training that they provide.

Endeavour operates largely in line with the worldwide Clubhouse model which numbers over 300 independent Clubhouses operating in more than 30 countries – see ICCD.org

How we are financed

Our income is a blend of community fundraising; local government small grants; ad hoc NSW Health and Primary Health Care specific purpose grants; occasional industry grants; private donations and NDIS service provision.

Members who have an NDIS plan can “purchase” services from Endeavour. This is somewhat of a headache from a budget perspective as Endeavour has no control over the decisions a Member and their NDIS plan manager may make. In extreme cases this may mean the sudden loss of a \$50,000 a year plan because the person has moved away or has changed their priorities.

How we promote our services

Inter-agency networking

Facebook page

Website – see www.endeavourclubhouse.com.au that includes an online giving portal.

Presentations to service clubs – Rotary, Lions, CWA, etc.

Providing placement opportunities for social work and welfare students

Providing a meeting space and catering for other agencies outside business hours.

Hosting community events (ie our annual Christmas Craft Fair which sees over 3000 attendees)



Collaborating with and contributing to the NSW Mental Health Commission's work – see <https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/content/examples-service-responses>

Staffing

Our current staffing of 5.24 FTE is made up of 9 staff with hours ranging from 35/week down to 5/week. This includes a part time CEO and accountant, a team leader and 7 mental health support workers.

It is important to note at this point that Endeavour is not a clinical service and our staff, including those who do have clinical training, are paid at various levels under the NSW SCHADS award.

3. What is working well

Endeavour has established a strong presence in the local mental health “scene” and is greatly appreciated by Members, many of whom refer to us as their family! While many of our Members have been referred after a suicide attempt, one of our greatest achievements is that none of our members have reattempted suicide. One of our staff, a former member, has advised that she would be unlikely to be here without the assistance and guidance of Endeavour.

Although we want our Members to move on from Clubhouse in their recovery journey, inevitably there are some who won't be able to take that next step. It is a tribute to the support and safety that Endeavour provides that these Members stay engaged and don't return to the isolation of living alone with nothing to do and all the negative consequences that go with that. That is, the expectations on an individual will not place them under pressure nor preclude them from ongoing services. We have members who have been with us since commencement again demonstrating the importance of consistency to people living with mental health issues.

Pick up and drop off is provided for Members living within the Port Macquarie urban area. However this range can be extended for Members who have a transport component in their NDIS plan.

We initially offered a 3 day a week service. However, from 2020 we have been able to expand and now offer a 4 day a week service that includes a few hours of one to one NDIS service on the 5th day. We are seeking more stable funding so as to be able to provide a 5 day a week service.

We are often told by family members and carers that Endeavour is the best thing that has happened to the person. Although we take every opportunity to promote our service, there is a common comment made such as “Why didn't I know about this service sooner” or “Why didn't someone tell me about Endeavour”.



4. What is not working well

Endeavour is currently limited in capacity to provide a standard Clubhouse model. This model includes:

- a 5 day a week service that promotes a work ordered day in which the talents and abilities of members are recognised and utilised within the Clubhouse;
- an evening/weekend social and recreational program which is the norm for working adults;
- participation in consensus-based decision making regarding all important matters relating to the running of the Clubhouse. This is a time hungry process but validates Members as their voices are heard, respected and acted upon.

As noted, in “How we are financed” above, the inconsistency of funding is an ongoing issue for us. This is a constant focus which takes energy away from service delivery. It also means that Members feel the impact of riding this “uncertainty cycle” – and that’s not good for people whose lives have been marred by a lack of regularity.

While we have been successful in seeking funding in the past the intermittent nature of funding does prevent longer term planning, particularly hiring and retaining staff, and developing more comprehensive activities to add to the current suite available.

For Members to benefit from this full suite we will need to increase staffing from the current 5.24 FTE to at least 6.74 FTE. That will mean increasing our annual wages budget from approximately \$445,000, inclusive of super and leave loading, to \$610,000.

5. Recommendations

We believe that the Portfolio Committee No. 2 should:

1. Recommend to the NSW Minister for Mental Health that Endeavour Mental Health Recovery Clubhouse be recognised as providing an invaluable community based mental health recovery service that in collaboration with the Mid North Coast Local Health District is highly effective in lowering inpatient readmission rates and in reducing suicide amongst recently discharged inpatients.
2. Recommend to the NSW Minister for Mental Health that in order to maintain and expand provision of this valuable service Endeavour be funded on an ongoing annual basis by NSW Health. An annual rate of \$300,000 adjusted according to CPI would provide approximately 40% of our annual expenses.
3. Recommend to the NSW Minister for Mental Health that, in collaboration with the Primary Health Networks, regional and rural communities across NSW be facilitated to establish Mental Health Recovery Clubhouse model services in their local areas.