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# Chair Chat

with Prof. David Gilchrist



## Mental Health Services at Nulsen

Last month I discussed some of the mental health issues occurring in Western Australia (WA). The mental health area is a service delivery area that will demonstrate considerable growth in WA during the coming decade. The key issues evident within the WA mental health sector include:

- A robust strategic planning framework named the 'Better Choices, Better Lives, WA Mental Health, Alcohol and other Drug Services Plan 2015 - 2025'.
- There are multiple funding sources available from both the State and Commonwealth Governments with the intent to increase the budget allocation of \$863 million (June 2017) to over \$1.9 billion by 2025, or an increase of over 220 percent.
- There is the stated intent to rebalance the current investment in high-cost hospital based services into community support and treatment options, combined with more focussed services to prevent mental illness and drug related harm.
- The state-wide target group in the mental health services area is estimated at more than 60,000 individuals. By comparison, the number of people living with disability targeted by the Bilateral Agreement (December 2017) is estimated at 47,941 by June 2023. The potential target group is estimated at 25 percent larger than in the disability services sector.
- This figure includes a potential customer base of about 6,500 individuals shared with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
- There are a large number of small to medium size service providers funded by the Mental

Health Commission (MHC) that received total funding of \$139 million during 2016/17. The vast majority of the current mental health services are provided by the government agencies (84 percent).

The Mental Health Commission desires the development of residential rehabilitation services to provide for the stabilisation of symptoms to enable treatment regimes to take full effect. The MHC prefers a flow-through model focussing on developing a 'resilience to recovery' approach. The MHC is also in the process of moving long-term residents out of hostel accommodation though transition into community-based services. This process will create more opportunities for a range of new services into the medium to long-term future and is an area in which Nulsen has substantial recent experience in providing community-based support. We believe that our knowledge and skills are transferable to providing high quality services in mental health.

### Strategic Priority

There was strong agreement from the internal Strategy Group in January 2018 that Nulsen should continue to develop its expertise in the mental health area and attempt to increase its provision of services. This is considered an organisational priority, with significant advantages available over the next five years to full rollout of the NDIS by June 2023.

A secondary objective is to diversify the range of Nulsen's revenue sources, based on the characteristics of participants and the source of funding and increase the amount and proportion of revenue attributed directly to mental health

services. Three main scenarios were considered by the Strategy Group, namely:

1. To continue to develop the current partnership arrangement where Nulsen will work with one or more service providers to develop services for people with dual diagnosis within the NDIS (Horizon 1).
2. To develop relationships and partnerships where services may be provided to a wider mental health target group (Horizon 2);
3. To progress in time to a completely separate service arm of the organisation (Horizon 3). The confirmation of this long-term direction will be evaluated and reconsidered over the next two years.

The intent is to commence employment of a Manager, Mental Health during October incorporated within the current management structure to increase the scope and range of services over time. The main duties of this position will be to:

- Manage the Mental Health Policy Portfolio.
- Manage and coordinate all current and new options, including the relationships with individuals, their families, carers and associated professionals.
- Become intimately involved in the strategic planning and budgeting of this area.

- Manage the relationship with both Government agencies and other Non-government services.
- Manage the teams of support staff.
- Represent Nulsen in sector forums and in discussions with key stakeholders.
- During the next twelve months, the Manager: Mental Health Services will need to plan and develop a number of tenders and services within the NDIS and the state Mental Health Commission.

In conclusion, the key strategy is to develop relationships and partnership arrangements where Nulsen Disability Services will work with one or more service providers to develop services for people with dual diagnosis in the first instance, moving towards a situation where services are provided to a wider mental health target group. The diversification of skills and new learning will be of reciprocal benefit to residents at Nulsen within our core services.

The proposal will be trialled for a minimum period of two years, from October 2018 to September 2020. By that time a number of the current issues of concern discussed in September's article should proceed towards resolution. An extension of the project to June 2023 will be carefully considered during 2020.



**Professor David Gilchrist** BA BBus PhD FCA FAIC is a chartered accountant and a historian. He holds a PhD in economics from the University of Notre Dame Australia and is currently a Professor at the University of Western Australia as well as the Public Sector Accounting and Disclosure Research Cluster. Over his 25-year career, David has held many senior roles in the not-for-profit, commercial and public sectors. He has taught at several universities across the globe, sits as Chairman on multiple boards and has published several key national reports. Achievements include: working as the Assistant Auditor General WA, the Associate Dean of the School of Business, University of Notre Dame Australia, Chairman to Nulsen Disability Services, and the Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association. David produced the "Australian Charities 2013" and the "Australian National Costing and Pricing Framework" issued jointly with National Disability Services. He is widely published as an academic and a journalist. [See David's full profile here.](#)