

# EVALUATION OF QUEENSLAND HEALTH'S CRISIS SUPPORT SPACES PROJECT SUMMARY

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## 1. What are Crisis Support Spaces?

Queensland Health's Crisis Support Spaces offer peer and clinical support for people who are going through a tough time mentally, or who are feeling suicidal. These spaces aim to be safe and welcoming places where people aged 18 years and over can go for help instead of an emergency department.

In the spaces, visitors can talk to peer workers (staff who had similar experiences to them) and mental health clinicians if they choose to. The spaces are located in hospitals and are open when other services are closed.

## 2. Why were the Crisis Support Spaces evaluated?

We evaluated the Crisis Support Spaces to see if they were working well, if they were providing better mental health care for visitors than emergency departments and to get ideas for how the service could work better in the future.

## 3. What did the researchers do?

- The Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research worked together with Queensland Health's Crisis Support Spaces staff, visitors and their support people to develop this evaluation.
- We visited the seven sites and talked to a total of 32 visitors and carers, 29 Crisis Support Spaces staff, as well as 10 hospital staff and 7 broader staff. We wanted to hear about people's experiences with the service and get their ideas for making it better.
- We also looked at anonymous information about the people who visited the spaces to understand who is using the service and whether it is helping them.

## 4. What are the main findings?

- Most visitors of Crisis Support Spaces were happy with the service and found it more helpful and a safer environment than going to an emergency department.
- Most visitors said they found the spaces welcoming, liked talking to peer workers, appreciated the supports provided (i.e., safety planning, self-management tools) and learning about other services.
- The service is helping visitors feel better emotionally at the end of their visit, and it is likely to prevent people from needing inpatient care.
- The spaces seem to be having a small impact on reducing the number of times that people need to go to the emergency department, and are helping to make the wait times in the emergency department shorter for people who need care.

## 5. What are the key recommendations?

- Extend the opening hours of the spaces and find ways of supporting more visitors while open.
- Hire more staff to work in the spaces and try to offer them permanent employment where possible.
- Set minimum training and supervision standards for staff to improve the quality of care.
- Find ways to better reach some groups that are not using the service as much, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds.
- Advertise and share information about the service more, such as online through social media posts and on the hospital's websites.
- Make sure that the physical spaces where the spaces are located are suitable, such as away from the medical ward and designed to look casual and relaxed.
- Make sure that all sites collect the same information about visits to the CSS and record the data in the same way, which will make it easier to evaluate and improve the service in future.

## 6. How can these findings be useful in the future?

The findings and recommendations we have identified through this evaluation can be used to improve current and future Crisis Support Spaces.

