

**Mental Health
Australia**

Annual Issues & Opportunities Workshop — Webinar Report

The State of Play at Mental Health Australia

Dr Leanne Beagley CEO

30 July 2020



Mentally healthy people,
mentally healthy communities

mhaustralia.org

Introduction: Annual issues & opportunities workshop

Each year, Mental Health Australia hosts a two-day Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop for members of the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives (National Register) and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF). This year, members from the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group from the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Project were also invited to attend.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the two-day face-to-face workshop was not possible, so the 2020 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop will occur across the year as a webinar series.

These webinars aim to further develop the representative skills of mental health consumers and carers already participating in national policy initiatives. In particular, the webinars are designed to develop representatives' advocacy, policy development, and leadership skills. The webinars also provide important networking opportunities for representatives.

The theme for the 2020 webinar series is **Consumer and Carer Leadership in a Time of Crisis – Social, Environmental and Political**.

The third Annual Workshop webinar was held on 30 July 2020 and was a presentation from Mental Health Australia's CEO, Dr Leanne Beagley.

Dr Leanne Beagley has been the Chief Executive Officer at Mental Health Australia since April 2020. Her background includes clinical qualifications in Occupational Therapy and Family Therapy, as well as a Master of Business Leadership and a PhD in Psychology in organisational culture and performance. Prior to working at Mental Health Australia Leanne worked for Western Victoria Primary Health Network as the Chief Executive Officer for three years. With 15 years' experience in direct mental health care in clinical settings in Melbourne, Leanne is also a former Director of Mental Health and Drugs at the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, a role she held for five years. She also has a range of experience as a non-executive Director on various boards, including the Western Alliance Academic Health Science Centre, Tweddle Child and Family Health Centre, and Eating Disorders Victoria.

The webinar was titled "The State of Play at Mental Health Australia". A total of 28 consumer and carer representatives attended the 1-hour webinar.

This report provides highlights from the webinar and a summary of the key themes and outcomes raised during the webinar or through the subsequent evaluation survey.



Webinar 3: The State of Play at Mental Health Australia with CEO Dr Leanne Beagley

Webinar Outline

1. Leanne's background and experience
2. Feedback from members and directions for Mental Health Australia
3. Thoughts on the mental health sector and the activities/issues we are facing

Key themes raised by consumers and carers during the webinar

- The “hidden epidemic of mental illness” arising as a result of the pandemic is largely an understandable reaction to a chaotic and uncertain time.
- Consumers and carers need to have their own voice, not simply be represented by other bodies. Mental Health Australia cannot speak on behalf of consumers and carers but can uplift and amplify their voices. Mental Health Australia's voice can also be informed by consumers and carers who should be centred in the mental health sector.
- Work with consumers and carers should be more than a ‘project’ in future; they should be included in the leadership in all areas of the mental health sector going forward.
- Physical health and alcohol & other drugs are important issues which need to be included in advocacy going forward as they intersect heavily with mental health.
- Australia needs to move away from the medicalisation of distress and towards a human rights model. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was clear on this.
- Mental Health Australia's project with Embrace Multicultural Mental Health is very important and should continue to be centred in Mental Health Australia's work.
- Rural and remote communities need more advocacy – it's difficult for some areas to get mental health services/clinicians via locums.
- There is more to do in the mental health sector to work together rather than competing with each other for funding. The insecurity and stress of running organisations makes this difficult.



Feedback

An evaluation survey was sent to all participants following the webinar, which 5 webinar participants responded to. These responses help gauge the level of participant satisfaction with the webinar as well as participants' reflections and insights.

Example Reflections

75% of Evaluation Survey respondents reported being very satisfied with the webinar overall.

"I learned that the lived experience voice will be amplified."

"The webinar gave me insight into MHA areas of focus and priorities."

"It was lovely to meet Leanne and learn about her background and focus for MHA."



Appendix 1: Webinar Attendees

National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives (the National Register)

The National Register is a pool of 60 trained mental health consumer and carer representatives from across Australia. National Register members work at the national level to provide a strong consumer and carer voice in the mental health sector. The National Register is a Mental Health Australia project.

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)

The NMHCCF is a combined national voice for mental health consumers and carers. The NMHCCF listen, learn, advocate and influence in matters of mental health reform. Mental Health Australia auspices and has a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the NMHCCF.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group

The CALD Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group is comprised of a CALD mental health consumer and a carer representative from each state and territory of Australia. The CALD Group includes a passionate, energised and diverse mix of voices, and provides advice to the National Multicultural Mental Health Project Alliance based on members' lived experience and connections to their communities.



Appendix 2: 2020 Workshop Working Group

The 2020 Annual Workshop planning was informed by a working group of consumer and carer representatives, who helped shape the theme, speakers and presenters for the webinar series.

The working group developed the theme of “Consumer and Carer Leadership in a Time of Crisis – Social, Environmental and Political” for this year’s Annual Workshop, which provided a focus for the webinar series.

Working group members included:

Susan Adam

Carer Representative — National Register Member

Fay Jackson

Consumer Representative — National Register Member

Noel Muller

Consumer Representative — National Register member

Carli Sheers

Consumer Representative — National Register Member

Hayley Solich

Carer Representative — NMHCCF and National Register Member



For more information please contact the Consumer and Carer Team at Mental Health Australia on 02 6285 3100 or at natreg@mhaustralia.org.

Mental Health Australia is the peak, national non-government organisation representing and promoting the interests of the Australian mental health sector and committed to achieving better mental health for all Australians. It was established in 1997 as the first independent peak body in Australia to represent the full spectrum of mental health stakeholders and issues. Mental Health Australia members include national organisations representing consumers, carers, special needs groups, clinical service providers, professional bodies, public and private mental health service providers, researchers and state/territory community mental health peak bodies.



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Mental Health Australia is the peak independent national representative body of the mental health sector in Australia.

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