

**Mental Health
Australia**

Annual Issues & Opportunities Workshop — Webinar Report

Leadership for our times: Social, environmental and political with
Inside Out & Associates Australia

21 May 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 first Annual Workshop webinar was held on 21 May 2020, and co-facilitated by Kath Thorburn and Sandy Watson of *Inside Out & Associates Australia*. Sandy and Kath are experienced facilitators with a background in mental health education, advocacy, leadership, peer work and project coordination, and intentional use of lived experience of mental health issues and caring to inform better service and systems responses to mental distress.

The webinar was titled "Leadership for Our Times: Social, Environmental and Political". A total of 45 consumer and carer representatives attended the 2-hour webinar.

Much of this report was drafted by *Inside Out & Associates Australia* and provides highlights from the webinar and a summary of the key themes and outcomes raised by mental health consumer and carer representatives during the webinar or through the subsequent evaluation survey.



Webinar 1: Leadership for our times: social, environmental and political with inside out & associates

Webinar overview (prepared by *Inside Out and associates*)

Leadership for our times involves adaptability, responsiveness, and connection. Given the current climate of uncertainty and unprecedented change, how can we, as consumer/carer representatives, provide leadership and advocate for the social, environmental and political issues and concerns of consumers and carers in Australia? What can we learn from each other and those around us about these issues and challenges, and ways we can advocate in relation to them?

- How can I use the wisdom of my lived experience to promote social and/or structural change - within communities; organisations, systems and services?
- If lived experience is a core ingredient of peer leadership, but not the only ingredient, what does peer leadership, or being a peer leader mean to us – collectively and individually?
- What areas of growth in peer leadership are we hoping to work towards or improve to support the changes that we are passionate about? And what supports and/or strategies will help us to get there?

Key themes raised by consumers and carers

- The importance of taking care of oneself while advocating
- The importance of power in advocacy and representation, including power imbalances with other diverse voices that struggle to be heard, and power imbalances when working with organisations who do not value lived experience voices
- Consumer and carer representatives need to be brave and have courageous conversations
- Seek support in your leadership, including from peak bodies, mentors, allies and community.



Feedback

An evaluation survey was sent to all participants following the webinar, which 32 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

78% of Evaluation Survey respondents reported being very satisfied or satisfied with the webinar overall.

"Excellent way it was arranged and good way to connect with our peers in these uncertain times."

"Difficult with so many on Zoom, but well done. It was useful to have the chance to experiment with break out rooms and whiteboard too."

"A very difficult thing to coordinate and get everyone to participate and I think the effort was great. Congratulations. I still miss the face to face naturally. So, no this would not be a preferred way :)"



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



Appendix 3: Webinar Agenda

Agenda	
12:00 – 12:30	Welcome Acknowledgement of country Webinar supports and tools Context and introductions
12:30 – 12:50pm	Using lived experience to promote & lead social and/or structural change
12:50 – 13:20pm	What does consumer/carer/peer leadership mean to us?
13:20 – 13:50pm	Leadership areas of growth and strategies to get there
13:50 – 14:00pm	Final comments, wrap up, evaluations & close



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.



Mental Health Australia



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

Mental Health Australia Ltd
9-11 Napier Close
Deakin ACT 2600
ABN 57 600 066 635

P 02 6285 3100
F 02 6285 2166
E info@mhaustralia.org
mhaustralia.org