

MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL OF
AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER
JULY 2010



M E N T A L
H E A L T H
C O U N C I L O F
A U S T R A L I A

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Promoting the mental health of all Australians



Mental Health – time to end the neglect

Letter from key mental health bodies

Australian of the Year Professor Pat McGorry, the Mental Health Council of Australia and over 20 key mental health groups have signed an open letter to both main party leaders, urging them to show 'true leadership' and to bring to an end the 'decades of neglect of Australians with mental ill health'.

We are still very much interested in gaining your support for the letter. We hope to have some form of a public release of a hard copy of the letter when Patrick McGorry is available in the next week or so.

If you would still like to be listed as a supporter of the call for better mental health services, please email your organisation's logo (in high resolution) and a representative's signature to natalie.soar@mhca.org.au by no later than COB Monday 9 August 2010.

Mental Health time to end the neglect

Dear Julia and Tony,

We call on both of you to show true **leadership** to bring to an end the decades of neglect of Australians with mental ill health. The community will no longer tolerate having only a one in three chance of getting access to mental health care.

Julia, we welcome your modest \$277m over four years commitment to suicide prevention, but we are still waiting for a **meaningful** investment in modern mental health services. Your commitment to making mental health a second term priority will be an empty promise without large scale and sustained investment. You know what measures are needed – invest in them.

Tony, we commend your \$1.5bn over four years commitment to youth mental health and early intervention services. This would transform the experience of young Australians with mental ill-health and relieve huge pressure on the mainstream health system. However, this investment must be stage one of a **long-term** reform plan and more needs to be done now for younger children and older adults.

We ask both of you to commit to end the unequal **access** to quality care for mental and physical health that is undermining families, communities and our national economy.

We ask both of you to **commit** to an annual independent mental health report card to ensure new investments deliver better services to all Australians.

This election we are relying on you both to do the **right** thing for Australia by ensuring all our communities have ready access to quality mental health care.



authorised by David Corbille of 9 Napier Close Death, paid for by the Mental Health Council of Australia

Mental health reform – where are we going?

David Crosbie, Chief Executive Officer

I was in London last month when the new government announced ‘the biggest reform of the UK National Health Service since its conception’. This was an amazing development. The new UK government is abolishing all the Primary Care Trusts (government health purchasing authorities) – only set up ten years ago and restructured (halved) five years ago – and giving all the money to buy patient services (over 80 billion pounds per annum) to GPs. This includes GPs buying hospital services, pharmacy services, allied health, etc.

It will come as no surprise for Australian readers to learn that the spin supporting this reform was about ‘putting patients back at the decision making centre of our health services.’ The new UK government even suggested that it was time for a new approach to patient involvement using the ‘unique’ catch phrase ‘nothing about us without us’ to describe their approach to patient empowerment. I am not sure how the proposed changes translate to health consumer empowerment when the government is giving much more money and control to doctors?

This new approach to health funding in the UK is in stark contrast to UK disability services where there has been an increasing reliance on personal budgets and self directed service systems. These are programs where the person with the disability develops their own support package (in accordance with agreed policy and funding guidelines) and becomes the purchaser of the services they need. This approach is much closer to what I understand as real consumer and carer empowerment and provides an interesting model for health reform.

Health reform is a major issue around the world, but it seems to have largely disappeared from the rhetoric about health during this election campaign. While I doubt the swinging voter focus groups would have warmed to the term, one of the communication barriers is that ‘health reform’ in Australia has become such a nebulous process. Balancing competing economic and political interests to change existing patterns of health funding and health service provision is always going to be a difficult ask, but even those who should know are struggling to understand what reforms like Medicare Locals and Local Hospital Networks might mean for health consumers and their communities. In the context of an election campaign driven by seven second grabs, it is clearly best not to try and explain the complexities of a health reform agenda.

Mental health is a significant factor in this election campaign, not only through high profile champions like Pat McGorry, Ian Hickie and John Mendoza, but also in the day to day discussions of campaign strategies and election feedback through talk back radio, blogs, letters to the editor, and other public forums. There is a groundswell of concern about current mental health service system failure. Each party has made major statements about mental health. While there are some positive indications about increased investments in the sector, the need to reduce some current practices and engage in mental health reform has rarely been mentioned.

Real mental health reform has to be grounded in an understanding of what happens to people in Australia who experience a mental health disorder. We know most people do not seek any treatment and the majority are turned away when they present at hospital emergency departments. We know large numbers are using services like GPs and psychologists, but we do not know how well these services address their needs. The MHCA has strongly advocated for an ongoing system of national accountability to monitor and report on the provision of appropriate mental health services. This means establishing a sustained program of independent measures and reporting to ensure whatever is funded continues to meet the mental health needs of the Australian community. The standard bureaucratic response to this fundamental need for transparent outcome-based accountability is to have any such proposal referred off to a sub-committee of a sub-committee to be fastidiously considered over the fullness of time.



Without a measurement framework mental health services will continue to operate blindly in terms of what happens to individual consumers and their carers when they need, try to access, or use mental health services. With appropriate measures in place, governments could actually make informed decisions about whether new investments are making a difference as well as being able to change and adapt mental health service provision (including prevention) to better meet needs over time. Current investment decision making rewards failure to achieve real outcomes exactly the same way as it rewards success in achieving outcomes.

There is a long history of the mental health sector being given part of what is needed at a particular point in time and told to accept it with grace while the sector continues to operate in what are largely outcome-blind systems. This perpetuates a cycle of putting urgently needed new mental health programs in place, waiting until underfunded service gaps turn into canyons of tragic failure, then mounting political and advocacy campaigns to win much needed additional program expenditure in the areas of urgent need. And so the cycle of bolt-on additions to a dysfunctional machine is maintained.

The MHCA will continue to support and advocate for addressing current service gaps. We need significantly increased government investment in a broad range of mental health services including child and youth, early psychosis, anti stigma, research, consumer and carer engagement, housing, employment and community care. But without sustained mental health reform based on independent accountability mechanisms, new investments can only achieve a limited benefit.

Policy discussions during election campaigns are often reduced to little more than shopping list comparisons. While accountability is a bargain buy, it is not seen as one of the must have items.

At the end of this election campaign I hope the mental health sector will have achieved commitments for urgently needed increased mental health services. I also hope there is a commitment to actively monitoring and reporting the experiences of consumers and carers to ensure there is real mental health accountability. Until these measures are in place, we are just adding trucks to a convoy going wherever the road takes us.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN **Simon Tatz - Director of Communications**

World Mental Health Week: 10th – 16th October 2010

World Mental Health Day (WMHD) is an annual event auspiced by the World Health Organisation, and occurs on 10 October each year. WMHD falls within what is now known as Mental Health Week, but as October 10 falls on a weekend this year, events are often moved within the week to enhance exposure and ensure maximum participation.

There is no 'one way' to mark WMHD. Overseas, they acknowledge WMHD in a variety of ways, from walks, to art exhibitions, open days and lectures. In helping to promote WMHD, our view is that it should be a celebration of achievement and an opportunity to discuss, 'where to from here' and 'where are we going' in terms of mental health in Australia.



Members might recall that in 2009 we decided to hold a first ever open forum at the National Press Club in Canberra to celebrate World Mental Health Day. The event was free, with lunch provided and a panel of guest speakers. The idea was to provide a forum where consumers, carers and stakeholders could interact with service providers, based around a scenario of a journey of a young mental health consumer through the 'system'.

We received very positive feedback from this event. Those attending told us that the chance to speak, to ask questions and to be involved was far more engaging than sitting through a lecture or speech.

The MHCA has again confirmed that its key WMHD activity will be a similar event at the National Press Club. The date is 7 October 2010. Again, it will be a free event with lunch provided. Sophie Scott, the ABC health reporter, has again agreed to be the facilitator. The MHCA can confirm that Senator Rachel Siewert will be one of the panel members for the forum. The event, if possible, will be filmed and the intention is to have it available on the MHCA website.

Details of the Forum on 7 October 2010 will be emailed to MHCA members, stakeholders, consumers and carers late August – early September. So reserve this date!

Awareness Campaign

WMHD promotional material is in the final stages of being production ready. For the first time, we are planning a national awareness campaign to promote WMHD and also mental health awareness in general.

First will be a cinema advert. This will be shown in selected cinemas in September-October this year. The film maker is an advertising agency called Arconline, and they have been working with the MHCA on a pro bono basis. Their commitment and support of the MHCA and mental health in general is incredible.

We have also created a series of TV and radio adverts to be aired later this year. Not everyone will like them. The ads are aimed at young men, a key target group. In focus testing done to date, young consumers love them, while older groups and others have expressed some reservations, mostly about the style. But those of you who watch the *Gruen Transfer* will know that advertisers are a strange group and have very strong ideas about how you raise 'awareness'.

In addition, later this year MHCA members will receive a pack with new WMHD posters and T-shirts. The posters will be on bus shelters, starting in Canberra and depending on funding, displayed in other capital cities. Lastly, we have booked billboard sites at Sydney and Melbourne airports for September-October to promote WMHD and mental health awareness. These are key locations and obviously hope to be able to do this in every capital city at some stage.

A new WMHD specific website – 1010.org.au – will be up and running in a little while. More details on that soon...



MENTAL HEALTH CARER SURVEY 2010
Linda Rosie – Carer Engagement Project Manager

The first of the annual Mental Health Carer Surveys is available for completion up until midnight, Friday August 6 2010

It is accessible on the internet or as a paper copy. See <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/286309/mental-health-carers-survey-2010>.

It has taken a long time to reach this point. Thanks to the last minute signing of a funding agreement the survey has finally been distributed.

Half of the 1500 carers who attended workshops during the Carer Engagement Project did not have access to the internet, hence the need for a paper survey.

As members of the MHCA, your organisation will have received the survey and an information sheet with a request to forward both through your networks and on to mental health carers. I thank you for your cooperation and playing your part in distributing the survey.

The more carers who complete the survey the stronger the voice mental health carers will have.

Please call the MHCA office on 02 6285 3100 for further information.





**NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH
CONSUMER & CARER FORUM**

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER CARER REGISTER WORKSHOP

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER AND CARER LEADERS CALL FOR ACTION UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

Discrimination and a failure to provide basic human rights is a major priority and election issue for members of the National Register of Mental Health Consumers and Carers and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum.

At a workshop held in April 2010, 46 individuals representing mental health consumers and carers from across Australia agreed that discrimination and improving the human rights of people affected by mental illness must be addressed by all tiers of government and that the failure to provide basic human rights must be urgently addressed, especially during the forthcoming federal election.

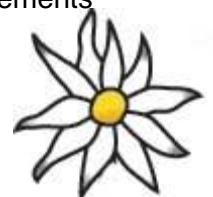
The representatives, who attended a workshop in Melbourne for the National Register of Mental Health Consumers and Carers and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, called for the rights of people with mental illness to form a major component of the Australian Government's Human Rights Framework.

"Australians affected by mental illness experience discrimination on a daily basis. People with mental illness and their carers are often denied their fundamental human rights," said Tony Fowke, Workshop Participant, President of the World Federation for Mental Health and a spokesperson for the group.

"Discrimination begins with a lack of access to the types of health and community support services needed by mental health consumers to be treated equally in society. This is also evident in the way they are treated when they try to gain employment or insurance coverage, not to mention how people with mental illness are often referred to in the media."

"We call on the Australian Government to ensure that funding allocated under its Human Rights Framework includes a major focus on the issues affecting people with mental illness".

These leading mental health consumer and carer representatives strongly believe mental health issues should feature prominently in school and staff education programs, in community engagement and public awareness campaigns, and in participation strategies including policies and statements about human rights.



Launch of Position Statement

The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) position statement: *Supporting and developing the consumer and carer identified workforce – a strategic approach to recovery*, will be launched by Senator Claire Moore on Thursday 16 September 2010 at The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) in Sydney.

The draft version of the position statement is currently available at: www.nmhccf.org.au/workforce

Recent Submissions from MHCA and NMHCCF

- May 2010 [Submission to Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration \(References\) Inquiry into the Council of Australian Governments Reforms relating to Health and Hospitals](#)
- July 2010 [NMHCCF Submission to the National Advisory Council on Mental Health on Mental illness and Income Support](#)
- July 2010 [MHCA Submission into the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Aged Care July 2010: Caring for Older Australians](#)
- July 2010 [Mental Health Council of Australia Submission to: Community Affairs Legislation Committee the National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010](#)

MHCA PHARMA COLLABORATION 2010-11 **Melanie Cantwell – Deputy CEO**

MHCA members would be aware that over several years, MHCA has developed a collaborative project with several pharmaceutical companies to supplement MHCA capacity.

The 2010-11 MOU is the formal basis of the agreement between MHCA and AstraZeneca, Eli Lilly, Janssen Cilag and Pfizer. Medicines Australia attends collaboration meetings as an observer. The MoU has the following mission:

The Pharmaceutical Industry and MHCA working together to support consumers, carers and health professionals to improve the quality of mental health care and outcomes for people with mental health problems by promoting the development and effective implementation of mental health policy.

The MHCA pharma collaboration partners met in May 2010 to begin planning for the 2010-11 activities and again in July 2010 to finalise the planned project outcomes.



Key project areas for this year will be:

- Undertaking a Quality Use of Medicines Project that:
 - Develops an online portal to provide information for consumers and carers regarding medicines decisions. This will be medication non-specific and assist consumers and carers in what questions they might ask health professionals about treatment choices and decisions.
 - Develops an advocacy consensus statement addressing the need for consumers and carers to be more involved in conversations about medications and other treatment decisions.
 - Engages with health professionals regarding the need for consumers and carers to be involved in their medicines decisions.
- Supporting the publication of a MHCA national mental health promotion and illness prevention publication.
- Supporting a MHCA parliamentary event (eg. launch of publication)
- Supporting World Mental Health Day activities.

MHCA will be encouraging member involvement in the QUM project and working with consumers, carers and health professional members to meet the project objectives.

Mental health input to PBAC decisions

Consumers and others are invited to provide input to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Council (PBAC) to consider in its deliberations about funding for new medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). This can be done through an online feedback form at http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PBAC_online_submission_form.

The November 2010 PBAC meeting information will be online at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PBAC-Meeting-Agenda-and-Consumer-Comments-Ip> from 22 September 2010, with comments on the agenda items due by 6 October 2010. It is unclear at this point if there will be any mental illness-specific medicines on the agenda for this meeting, so if you are interested keep an eye on this website.

More information about PBAC, its membership and process is also available at the above website.



Insurance Project survey

Rachelle Irving, Director Projects and Research

Insurance is one area in which mental health consumers may face discrimination, both in their attempts to access insurance and in the handling of claims.

When you apply for life insurance, the insurer will assess the risk that you might make a claim in the future. This process is known as underwriting. Underwriting aims to make the cost of your insurance proportionate to the risk involved, and have people with the same or similar risk paying the same premium. Underwriting relies on the use of statistical data and actuarial estimates.

If you have experienced a medical condition, including a mental illness, whether or not that condition was disabling in the past, insurance companies will consider that you are statistically more likely to need to claim against your life, income protection or disability insurance in the future. This statistically greater likelihood of making a claim means that mental health consumers may experience difficulties in obtaining life insurance, income protection insurance or disability insurance. Insurers might refuse to insure you at all, or might offer you a policy with only limited benefits and/or at a higher premium.

We are interested in the experiences of people with a history of a mental illness relating to their applications and claims for insurance products. But to do this, we need your help in completing the questionnaire to tell us how people with mental illness are being treated by insurance companies.

The survey has less than 30 questions all of which are simple and relate to your experience when applying for insurance as well as the claims process if relevant. The survey shouldn't take more than 10-15 minutes to complete, but your responses will enable us to gain more insight into any processes that we can work towards changing into the future.

To access the survey, participants will simply have to click on the link provided below.

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s/297893/consumer-experiences-of-mental-health-and-insurance>

All surveys completed will be anonymous and treated confidentially.

We would appreciate you completing the survey as soon as possible although you will have an opportunity to complete it any time up until 23 August 2010 when we will have to close the survey. We will be publishing a report about the survey findings on our website but should you request it, we would also be only too happy to send you a copy of the results.



Stress Down Day, 23 July 2010

In recognition of Lifeline's annual Stress Down Day, the staff at the Mental Health Council of Australia were treated to a day of relaxing activities, including a massage from the wonderful therapists at Massage to Motivate, lunch from Sumo Salad and bowling. A great day was had by all whilst raising funds for Lifeline.



Ellie Wilson de-stressing!



Amy Waterford, Natalie Soar, Kylie Wake and Fran Gray.

World Mental Health Week activities

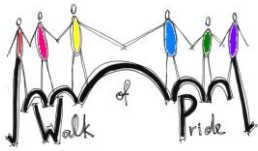
Sent by email Friday 30th July 2010.

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) would like to invite all member organisations to submit a short paragraph about the World Mental Health Week activities you may be organising or holding for 2010. The event information will appear on the MHCA website and in the September MHCA newsletter to assist in raising awareness of the events taking place across Australia.

Please submit a short paragraph about your planned activities, including event venue, dates and times etc. by **Friday 3rd September** to admin@mhca.org.au.



MHCA Member World Mental Health Week 2010 Activities



Queensland Alliance, ARAFMI Qld and Reclink, QLD Queenslanders Walk With Pride during Mental Health Week 2010

Arafmi Qld, Reclink and Queensland Alliance are holding the second annual Walk of Pride on 10/10/2010 in Brisbane.

The Walk of Pride invites consumers, carers and workers in the mental health sector to walk together and demonstrate pride in the acknowledgement of mental health issues. It is also open to the wider community. The Walk of Pride will be a colourful procession that brings community awareness to the journey of mental health and addresses the stigma associated with mental illness.

This year participants will gather from 10am at Emma Miller Place (Roma St Forum). Following introductory speeches and entertainment, the walk will take a half hour, starting at 11:30am and concluding at 12 midday-in time for the Queensland Health state launch of Mental Health Week at Roma St Parklands.

For more on what's happening during mental health week in Queensland, visit www.qldalliance.org.au



AFFIRM, ACT Launch of "We Say No to Stigma" and function at Government House

Mental Health Week will again be a focal activity for AFFIRM: The Australian Foundation for Mental Health Research in 2010. We have organised for young researchers and AFFIRM Ambassadors to speak to students in 10 high schools across Canberra in Mental Health Week to raise funds and awareness of mental health and research. We will also be releasing new research in the media, and running an advertising campaign about the importance of research, particularly in young people, in the Canberra Times. We will be launching "We Say No to Stigma", an online campaign aimed at reducing stigma around mental health and raising awareness for research. AFFIRM will also hold a function for AFFIRM supporters (by invitation only) at Government House, hosted by Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, the Governor General of Australia.

On Track Community Programs Inc, QLD Annual Tweed Family Mental Health Fun Day, 8th October 2010

On Track Community Programs Inc will celebrate Mental Health Day by partnering with other local services to host the annual Tweed Family Mental Health Fun Day on Friday 8th October 2010 at Goodwin Park in Coolangatta QLD. Activities will commence from 10am with; footy challenges, pinnacle of terror, mad sports, laughter yoga, massages, art flag craft, face painting and Indigenous workshops. Performances will include; Island and Aboriginal dancers, Hot Chillli Drummers, Belly dancers, youth and family acts plus Ray Catt & Alannah Fox. Information stands with relevant community service details plus food stalls offering an array of nibbles will be available until 3pm. We invite members of the general public, those effected by mental illness including carers, family, colleagues and friends to join us in raising awareness of mental health by acknowledging that 'good friends help us bounce back'.

Also in October to celebrate Carers Week, a BBQ lunch is planned for a group of 20 mental health carers who meet monthly in Tweed Heads for support, education and friendship. Last year the group enjoyed a three course meal at Kingscliff TAFE and was treated to free massages from students of the Healthy Living Centre. Plans are yet to be finalized for this year's outing as we are awaiting the outcome of a submission to Carers NSW re funding this event.



Multicultural Mental Health Australia Launch of Speakers Bureau Resource Pack

Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) will launch its Speakers Bureau Resource Pack during Mental Health Week 2010. This training kit was developed in conjunction with Mindframe and support from the SANE Australia media centre. It includes strategies to equip consumers and carers with the necessary skills to tell their stories in the media and in public settings. It includes information about the media; how to prepare for an interview; and guidelines for reporting responsibly on mental illness and suicide.

The Speakers Bureau is a major component of MMHA's stigma reduction campaign and this resource will help to build up this national network of empowered and inspirational speakers. This resource will also be useful for stakeholders across the sector who wish to engage the media and promote mental health awareness.

MMHA will also be sending out a promotional material to NGOs and service providers, including posters, brochures and multi-lingual fact sheets. For more information or to request a promotion pack, please email Rebecca.Lewis@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria, VIC 'Inside Out' and Open Mind Fiesta.

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, in association with Christine Dunstan Productions, presents *Inside Out* - the award winning play about the impact of a young man's emerging schizophrenia on his family - as part of Mental Health week - at Frankston Arts Centre on October 8 and 11; Eastbank Centre Shepparton on October 12; Alexander Theatre at Monash University, October 14, and Clocktower Centre Moonee Ponds, October 15. For performance times and booking details, go to www.mifellowship.org.

Mental Health Week culminates with Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria's *Open Mind Fiesta* in Station Street, Fairfield on Sunday October 17, from 11 am to 5 pm. One of the most anticipated events on the community calendar, the *Fiesta* provides a day for thousands to support the promotion of mental health in an atmosphere of family fun, with the message *that when mental illness affects a family member, it affects us all*.

