



National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) Report

Name of Delegate:

State / Territory:

Date of meeting: 20 – 21 September 2007

Venue: Holiday Inn Melbourne Airport

Consumer / Carer Representative (please circle)

Key Issues Discussed:

Strategic Plan

Working groups met during the most recent face to face meeting to progress activities under the strategic plan:

- **Privacy and confidentiality:** This working group is in the process of developing a survey to identify the key privacy and confidentiality issues for consumers and carers. The survey is anticipated to be finalised and released in Nov/Dec 2007.
- **Seclusion and restraint:** This working group is in the process of developing a NMHCCF Position Paper on the use of seclusion and restraint to be circulated widely within the sector.
- **Welfare to work:** Following a training session on lobbying that was undertaken by the NMHCCF at this meeting, this working group identified the opportunity to lobby politicians in the lead-up to the federal election. Since the meeting a letter has been sent to targeted MPs requesting information on specific party policies.
Responses to this information will be circulated to consumers and carers by NMHCCF members through their networks.
- **Enhanced NMHCCF profile:** A brochure on the NMHCCF has been updated and is anticipated to be available for circulation in time for the World Psychiatric Association Congress on 29 November 2007. A new website structure was developed and it is hoped that this upgrade will be completed by the end of the year.
- **Enhanced NMHCCF relationships:** An MOU between the Mental Health Council of Australia and the NMHCCF has been finalised and ongoing strategies for building relationships including the development of promotional materials and improved reporting schedule were agreed.
- **Raise the political awareness of the priorities and concerns of mental health consumers and carers prior to the 2007 federal election:** A letter was sent to all federal MPs and Senators seeking information on mental health related election policies in areas of consumer and carer concern. Compiled responses will be circulated to NMHCCF members who will then circulate this through their own networks to consumers and carers.

World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Congress 2007 in Melbourne:

- WPA has sponsored a NMHCCF consumer and carer to attend the WPA Congress. The NMHCCF Executive selected Eileen McDonald, NSW Carer Rep to share with Warren Jenkins, Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia and David Lovegrove ACT Consumer Representative.
- NMHCCF will be represented at a booth at the conference to be shared with other mental health consumer and carer groups.

Senate Community Affairs Committee *Inquiry into Mental Health Services*

in Australia: A submission from the NMHCCF was made and can be viewed on http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/COMMITTEE/CLAC_CTTE/mental_health/index.htm.

Key points can be found in the executive summary and include:

- Despite some increased rhetoric about consumer and carer participation, there are still very limited opportunities for consumers and carers to have real input into national policy development and implementation.
- The COAG National Action Plan has failed to capitalise on the opportunity to use consumer and carer participation to shape appropriate and measurable service improvements.
- Human rights for mental health consumers remains a critical issue in the delivery of services and needs to be addressed through
 - stronger leadership,
 - an appropriate allocation of resources and
 - genuine accountability in the form of demonstrated and measurable action.
- This strategy should be applied in particular to
 - the practices of seclusion and restraint in acute mental health services;
 - the clarification of privacy and confidentiality provisions for consumers and carers which in many cases are an identifiable barrier to recovery.
- The Australian Government's Welfare to Work initiative works to undermine the COAG National Action Plan and the National Mental Health Strategy. A whole of government approach is required to review the initiative in consultation with consumers and carers.

NMHCCF representation on External Committees:

The NMHCCF continued its input to a range of national consultations including the revision of the National Mental Health Policy and Plan. Feedback has been that the implementation of the previous iterations of both the National Mental Health Policy and the Plan have been poor and significant commitment will be required to ensure the success of any future national mental health policy and plan.

Ongoing funding for NMHCCF

On 14 September the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) Mental Health Standing Committee (MHSC) approved funding for the NMHCCF until 30 June 2008 and advised that it would consider an expression of interest for funding beyond that date at its February 2008 meeting.

Key Decisions Made:

- Ongoing progress on strategic plan initiatives as outlined above.
- NMHCCF training needs identified in dealing with the media and advanced communication and negotiation skills.
- Next NMHCCF teleconference will be on 5 December 2007.

Actions Required:

- A range of ongoing activities for NMHCCF members are outlined above and the focus over the next few months will be on progressing the NMHCCF's strategic plan initiatives.