



National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum

The NMHCCF is a combined national voice for mental health consumers and carers. Members listen, learn, influence and advocate in matters of mental health reform. The NMHCCF was established in 2002 by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council and reports to the Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Principal Committee. Funding is provided by the Australian Government and state and territory governments. It is currently auspiced by Mental Health Australia.

Membership of the NMHCCF is comprised of one consumer representative and one carer representative from each Australian state and territory and representatives from the following population groups, projects, and consumer and carer organisations:

- blueVoices
- Carers Australia
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Grow Australia
- Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia
- Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network Australia
- Former Australian Mental Health Consumer Network
- Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHIMA) Project¹
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The NMHCCF met three times face to face in 2016-17; 12-13 September 2016, 2-3 March 2017 and 23 June 2017.

2016-17 Achievements

The NMHCCF provides advocacy on mental health consumer and carer issues through representation on a large number of national bodies, such as government committees and advisory groups, professional bodies and other consultative forums and events. NMHCCF members also research and prepare submissions, raise awareness and share information relevant to consumers and carers at the national level. Members use their lived experience, understanding of the mental health system and communication skills to advocate and promote the issues and concerns of consumers and carers and ensure these are addressed as part of the national policy development and planning processes in Australia.

Submissions

The NMHCCF contributed to the following consultations, reports, issues and policies:

- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) Regulation Impact Statement regarding the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

¹ The MHIMA Project ended on 31 December 2016.

- Australian NGO Coalition Submission to the United Nations Review of Australia Fifth Periodic Report under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR)
- ACSQHC Draft National Consensus Statement: Essential Elements for Recognising and Responding to Deteriorations in a Person's Mental State.
- Australian Government Productivity Commission Inquiry into Human Services Preliminary Report
- Australian Government Department of Health Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- Australian Government Department of Social Services Draft Model for the Delivery of Carer Support Systems
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) Code of Ethics

The NMHCCF also:

- formally endorsed the Civil Society NDIS Statement coordinated by the Disabled People's Organisations Australia
- wrote an article on Reasonable Adjustments which was published in the Summer 2017 issue of newparadigm – The Australian Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation
- participated in a Gaskin Research Project on behalf of the ACSQHC – tracking signs of deterioration in a person's mental state
- participated in the selection panel for the review of the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives (selecting 60 members)
- rebranded and modernised the NMHCCF logo and updated documents and publishing materials in accordance with the new style guide
- provided feedback to the National Mental Health Commission review into suicide and self-harm prevention services for the Australian Defence Force
- continue to be a member of a NGO coalition which intends to provide submissions to the various United Nations reporting agencies/committees as Australia reports through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

For more information and copies of public submissions please visit the NMHCCF website, www.nmhccf.org.au

Representation on national committees, working groups and at conferences

In 2016-17 NMHCCF representatives continued to provide consumer and carer perspectives at national mental health committees and events. In addition to involvement on existing committees and working groups, a total of 9 consumer and 11 carer representatives from the NMHCCF have been selected for the following new opportunities this financial year:

- Informa 4th Annual National Mental Health Conference – presentation
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) workshop - presentation
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) Advisory Group on National Psychosocial Online Resource Project
- National Mental Health Commission (NMHC) symposium and workshop on the economics of mental health
- 17th International Mental Health Conference – poster presentation

- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) National Conference – guest speakers
- National Mental Health Commission (NMHC) Consumer and Carer Engagement and Participation Project Steering Group
- National Implementing Mental Health Reform Conference – guest speakers
- National Stop Domestic Violence Conference – poster presentation
- Australian Government Department of Health National Mental Health Reform Stakeholders Advisory Group
- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) webinar panel on Trauma Informed Counselling Practices
- Primary Health Networks (PHN) Advisory Panel on Mental Health
- PHN Mental Health Lead Sites Evaluation Project – Evaluation Advisory Group
- Towards Elimination of Restrictive Practices 11th National Forum – invited speaker
- National Mental Health Commission – Monitoring and Reporting Framework Advisory Committee
- National Mental Health Commission – Equally Well Consensus Statement Implementation Committee.

NMHCCF representatives also participated in the following forums and events, at the request of organisers:

- Australian Government Department of Health Digital Mental Health Gateway Consultation
- Mental Health Australia Grace Groom Oration 2016
- Mental Health Australia Members Policy Forum - November 2016
- Australian Government Department of Health Consumer and Carer Fifth National Mental Health Plan Consultation Workshop
- Australian Government Department of Health Fifth National Mental Health Plan and the NDIS Consultation Workshop - December 2016
- Australian Government Department of Health Fifth National Mental Health Plan Key Stakeholder Group Workshops – April 2017
- Consumer and Carer Leadership Colloquium (hosted by Consumers Health Forum, National Rural Health Alliance and Mental Health Australia)
- Mental Health Australia Parliamentary Advocacy Day – March 2017
- National Mental Health Commission Equally Well Consensus Statement Stakeholder Workshop for the Implementation Strategy.
- National Mental Health Commission Housing & Homelessness in Mental Health Jurisdictional Workshops.

Letters to Government

In December 2016 the NMHCCF co-signed an open letter from the mental health sector to First Ministers expressing concern about the gaps between previous commitments by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the consultation draft of the Fifth National Mental Health Plan. The letter urged Ministers to revisit the scope of the draft Fifth Plan to put in place necessary conditions for successful whole-of-government action on mental health.

In December 2016 the NMHCCF also supported and co-signed a Civil Society NDIS Statement to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) calling for stronger engagement with people with disability in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

In January 2017 the NMHCCF wrote to Minister Hunt congratulating him on his appointment as the new Minister for Health with responsibility for mental health. The letter outlined the work of the NMHCCF, current priorities and offered to work with the Minister on mental health reform going forward, including inviting him to future meetings.

In March 2017 the NMHCCF and the Private Mental Health Consumer and Carer Network (PMHCCN) wrote to the Minister for Health regarding increasing discriminatory practices by health insurance funds to cover psychiatric care. The letter outlined the concerns of consumers and carers regarding the number of restrictions of cover for many policies and the perceived intent for the larger insurance companies to remove psychiatry cover from their product altogether.

NMHCCF 2016-17 Workplan activities

The NMHCCF met face to face three times in 2016/17 which included allocated time for working group activities. Members participated in the following working groups, to progress NMHCCF priorities and workplan activities:

- Psychosocial Disability Working Group*
- Rights, Disability and Mental Health Working Group*
- Communication, Partnerships and Promotion Working Group
- Advocacy Brief Editorial Working Group
- Consumer and Carer Participation Working Group
- Psychotropic Iatrogenic Disorders and Advocacy Working Group

*The Psychosocial Disability Working Group and the Rights, Disability and Mental Health Working Group amalgamated in March 2017 and are now called the Rights and Practices Working Group.

The working groups progressed activities aligned with the following six goals:

1. Enhance, promote and progress genuine national partnerships and inclusion of mental health consumers and carers at all levels of government and community.
2. Improve access to, and sharing of, NMHCCF information between national, state and territory networks and organisations.
3. Increase capacity of mental health consumers and carers to advocate and participate in legislation and policy development, implementation, delivery and evaluation at all levels.
4. Provide an informed strong and unified voice on consumer and carer issues to government, the mental health sector and other identified stakeholders.
5. Identify and promote good and ethical mental health initiatives, ensure the adherence of human rights principles and legislation. Insist on meaningful inclusion and recognition of consumers and carers in all aspects of a contributing life framework.
6. Build a knowledge base of mental health services and programs, national and jurisdictional plans, Acts and strategies to underpin and inform the work of the NMHCCF.

Project on the Direct, Adverse Effects of Neuroleptics/Antipsychotics

The NMHCCF Psychotropic Iatrogenic Disorders and Advocacy Working Group collaborated with lived experience researchers from Curtin University to review the adverse effects of neuroleptic drugs (antipsychotics). This research project was initiated when the NMHCCF became concerned about the fact that many consumers and carers were unaware of the direct, adverse effects associated with neuroleptics and also the inconclusive nature of evidence underpinning their use. Throughout all areas of the literature examined, there was a distinct lack of lived experience engagement in terms of the impact of direct, adverse effects of neuroleptics on consumers.

The review shows that neuroleptics can have a short term role in personal recovery but as recovery is a unique, individual process, the role of the drugs will be different for each person. The Critical Literature Review (CLR) document details the history of neuroleptic drugs, their efficacy, their long term use, prescribing practices, direct adverse effects and alternative responses to mental health issues. The CLR and accompanying booklet for consumers and carers 'What you may not know about antipsychotics' will be launched at 2017 TheMHS Conference.

NMHCCF Evaluation

In 2016/17, an independent evaluation of the NMHCCF was undertaken, at the request of the Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Principal Committee (MHDAPC), who provide operational funding to the NMHCCF.

Craze Lateral Solutions were engaged to carry out this evaluation. The evaluation considered the entirety of the NMHCCF's achievements within current resources, limitations and opportunities, and against the backdrop of a rapidly changing mental health policy and service landscape.

The evaluation included examination of the following elements:

- NMHCCF membership and reporting lines; constituency connections
- performance of the NMHCCF, including consideration of current funding
- current auspice arrangement and contractual/funding agreements
- governance and operational processes
- resources – management of funding and staffing
- collaboration and partnerships
- effectiveness of promotion, publications and advocacy tools.

MHDAPC will be considering the evaluation report and key recommendations later in 2017.



2016/17 Membership

State/Territory / Organisation	Representative
Australian Capital Territory	Jane Grace (Consumer) Janet Milford (Carer)
New South Wales	Allison Kokany (Consumer) Eileen McDonald (Carer)
Northern Territory	Philip Dempster (Consumer) Aaron Morris (Carer) from October 2016
Queensland	Noel Muller (Consumer) Peter Dillon (Carer)
South Australia	Lyn English (Consumer) Margaret Springgay (Carer)
Tasmania	Amber Meredith (Consumer) until December 2016 Jan West (Consumer) from May 2017 Elida Meadows (Carer)
Victoria	Consumer position vacant Katrina Clarke (Carer)
Western Australia	Lorraine Powell (Consumer) Debra Sobott (Carer)
blueVoices	Annabeth Bateman (Consumer) Emma Donaldson (Carer)
Carers Australia	Geoff Lucas (Carer) until February 2017 Peter Heggie (Carer) from April 2017
Consumers Health Forum of Australia	Janet Meagher (Consumer) until January 2017
Grow Australia	Helen Abbott (Consumer)
Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia	Kristine Havron (Carer)
Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network Australia	Patrick Hardwick (Carer) Norm Wotherspoon (Consumer) from August 2016

Interim representative from the former Australian Mental Health Consumer Network ²	Michael Burge (Consumer)
Mental Health in Multicultural Australia	Manjit Kaur (Consumer) until 31 December 2016 Sonia Di Mezza (Carer) until 31 December 2016
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative	Simon Williams (Carer)

² The Australian Mental Health Consumer Network (AMHCN) ceased operations in late 2008. The (then) Mental Health Standing Committee has provided in principle agreement that the former AMHCN representative should remain on the NMHCCF as a consumer representative until the new peak national mental health consumer organisation is established.