



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

ACT MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER NETWORK INC.
THE GRIFFIN CENTRE, LEVEL 2, ROOM 11
GENGE ST. CIVIC
P.O.BOX 469 – CIVIC SQUARE- ACT 2608
PHONE: 02 6230 5796 FAX: 02 6230 5790
EMAIL: ACTMHCN@ACTMHCN.ORG.AU
WEBSITE: WWW.ACTMHCN.ORG.AU

In loving memory of our dear friend and colleague
Michael Firestone



22 October 1969-02 February 2010

Mental Health Consumers participating, improving and changing mental health services

GOALS OF THE NETWORK

- To provide accountable broad representation that is informed, valued and supported by the Network;
- To provide proactive systemic advocacy from a consumer perspective;
- To work collaboratively with other organisations and mental health consumers;
- To create and build a supportive environment within the organisation and outside which is empowering to mental health consumers; and
- To govern the Network in a responsible and sustainable way.

COMMITTEE 2009-10

David Lovegrove	Chair
Jane Williams	Deputy Chair (until February 2010)
Colin Hales	Secretary/Deputy Chair (until July 2010)
Phillip Green	Assistant Secretary
Philip Brown	Treasurer/Ordinary Member
Kerry Fry	Ordinary Member/Secretary from April 2010
William Barreda	Ordinary Member
Stephanie Bassingthwaite	Ordinary Member
Keith Mahar	Ordinary Member (June-July 2010)
Irma Norris	Ordinary Member
Stephen Price	Ordinary Member (until July 2010)
Sarah Shepherd	Ordinary Member

STAFF

Dalane Drexler	Executive Officer
Leliana Setiono	Policy & Participation Coordinator
Sarah Stringer	Policy & Participation Coordinator/Finance Officer
Stephanie Shu-Jen	Community Education Coordinator
Keah Woodgate	Administration Officer
Vicki da Silva	Administration Worker (until 03 November 2010)
Michael Firestone	Information Worker (until 02 February 2010 – d.)
Sheryl Pedashenko	Student Researcher – University of Canberra

CHAIR'S REPORT

The ACTMHCN ('the Network') has emerged from a difficult and challenging year in a stronger and fitter state to continue to build and develop upon its new, more stable and sustainable foundation. The past year has been a vital, indeed a critical, watershed year for the Network in that it has reached a new threshold in organisational capacity and sustainability. This is only fitting as the Network has also been more formally acknowledged as the Peak Body for mental health consumers in the ACT, and is now better placed to continue to grow steadily in this role.

In this regard, the Network's most significant achievement has been the successful establishment of a full complement of staff following the increased funding from ACT Health for the work of policy development, representative program coordination and support, and wider consumer participation. The ongoing development of this new office team is progressing well under the leadership of our Executive Officer, Dalane Drexler. Dalane, who was selected as our EO in October, 2009, is growing steadily into this challenging and demanding role and she has driven a number of important developments at the Network. Notably she is overseeing the development of our increasingly popular training courses in Self-Advocacy and Consumer Advocacy, which are being developed by our newest staff member Stephanie Shu-jen. This is the first time the Network has had the capacity to develop its own in-house training programs.

Dalane heads a talented and dedicated staff team consisting of Sarah Stringer, Leliana Setiono, Keah Woodgate, and now also Stephanie Shu-jen, following the recent departure of Vicki Da Silva. Vicki has been a significant person and presence in the Network office for over four and half years. We will miss her, particularly for her many thoughtful and caring ways that have contributed much to ensuring the workplace environment has a more personal and welcoming face. We wish Vicky every success in whatever she undertakes in the future, including continuing as a member involved in the Network in other ways. It is also particularly fitting that Vicky is the first recipient of our Michael Firestone Scholarship for mental health and community development studies.

The sudden death of our valued staff member and colleague in advocacy, Michael Firestone, in February this year, was a shock to us all. Yet in difficult circumstances, the Network's staff, committee, members and friends, and eventually Michael's estranged family, all rallied together magnificently to organise memorable commemorations and celebrations of Michael's life and work. We will long continue to miss him, his unique abilities and contributions as a staff member, and his tireless and talented consumer advocacy both through his work at the Network, privately, and in his roles as a Caucus and Board member, and Secretary of the MHCC ACT. We will continue to honour Michael's memory and work.

There have been a number of significant achievements for the Network over this past year. One of these has been the successful re-establishment and development of the monthly Consumer Representatives' Feedback Forum, through the facilitation and

support of Sarah Stringer and Leliana Setiono. We are steadily building a strong and growing team of consumer representatives. A number of our representatives are now also members of the National Register of Consumer and Carer Representatives, which is auspiced by the Mental Health Council of Australia, with the support of the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum. Other new developments for the Network in this context include the Chair being invited by ACT Health to Co-Chair the Strategic Oversight Group for the Implementation of the ACT Mental Health Services Plan, 2009-14. Another member, Catherine Settle, was invited to serve on the ACT Mental Health Advisory Council which advises the Minister Katy Gallagher. More recently, another member, Bradley Foxlewin, has been invited by Mental Health ACT to Co-Chair the newly established Community Engagement Forum at the Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) at the Canberra Hospital.

One very important example of the success and potential of the Network's Representative program has been the involvement and leading roles of its representatives in sustained, collaborative efforts to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in Mental Health ACT facilities since 2006. In particular, their work over the past 18 months at the weekly Seclusion and Restraint Review Meeting of the Psychiatric Services Unit of the Canberra Hospital, has resulted in cultural and systemic change and practices that are reflected in the dramatic reductions in the numbers of people being secluded in that unit from hundreds per year to just a handful currently. The work of this Review Meeting has also provided the subject matter for the first consumer led research project in the ACT led by one of our members and former representative, Bradley Foxlewin, who also co-presented this work at the 2010 TheMHS Conference in Sydney. Since gaining that National attention, Mental Health teams from interstate have come to Canberra to dialogue with our team to learn how it is being done.

This new model of collaboration and co-leadership in systemic reform and cultural change is driven and co-lead by consumer representatives taking on new, skilled and diversified specialist roles. This model also succeeds by services valuing and embracing the need for the consumer voice and needs to be the driver at all levels of the clinical or service context, and builds in mechanisms that embrace the reflection, deeper dialogue and analysis and of skilled consumer representatives. Valuing and engaging the expertise of lived experience in this way has far reaching implications as a model that can be applied in many other mental health service contexts, whether clinical or psycho-social in the community.

Over this year, the Network, its members and representatives have also strongly supported and worked collaboratively with the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT, and its Caucus of Consumers and Carers. This has also brought significant advances for all members and for the common goals of both organisations.

Another significant event this year was our Strategic Planning day and its preceding survey of members, and the subsequent process that has resulted in our new strategic plan. I'd like to thank Kate Hayes for her work in facilitating this process, and for the support to embrace and develop it by Dalane, our staff and committee members.

What has clearly emerged from this process is the overwhelming re-affirmation of the value of the Network's systemic advocacy, education and training roles for which it is funded, that is, to enable having the collective consumer voice play increasingly collaborative and leading roles at all levels of decision making in mental health planning and service provision. This is leading to the development of an increasing diversity of consumer roles and the increasing need to develop a consumer identified peer workforce.

Increasingly we are hearing from our members and volunteers the urgent need for peer support and advocacy for individual consumers' day to day support needs, to help them navigate the service system, and for support to live valued lives in the community to which they eagerly wish to contribute more.

This is a critical, unmet need even for Network members who want to participate sustainably in the governance, representative and other work of the Network. Investment in peer advocates would be a valuable investment in people to be, and stay on the path of recovery, and would be repaid many times over in enriching the life of our community as well as that of mental health consumers seeking a life filled with increasing health and wellbeing.

Best wishes and warm regards



David Lovegrove
Chair

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

It has been a very tough year for the Network, experiencing both challenges and achievements throughout. All in all, the Network has pulled strongly through the year and is feeling stronger and better than ever!

Funding and staff

Early in the financial year we were disheartened by a retraction of the previous years' small underspend however on closer inspection the amount retracted was found to be too high and ACT Health graciously refunded the difference, a very welcome move for the Network.

Over the year we have built a strong permanent team of well-educated, highly skilled staff. We were very pleased to welcome Sarah Stringer back to the team in July 2009 as Consumer Representative Program Coordinator. Through Sarah's hard work and determination the Consumer Rep Program has begun to flourish, with new consumer representatives coming on board throughout the year. Sarah also agreed to take on the organisational finances with her vast knowledge and experience in this area and since this time the Network's budget has been tracking well and looks to be doing well for the 2010-11 financial year also.

At the end of October 2009 I was glad to commit to the Executive Officer position following recruitment processes after previously holding the role of Policy and Participation Development Worker. This followed a number of months acting in the position after Simon Viereck made the decision to leave the Network. Simon helped to build the Network into what it is today and through his strong contributions I was able to pick up where he left off and build the Network further throughout the year.

In January 2010 the Network recruited Leliana (Leli) Setiono as Policy and Participation Development Worker. Leli has demonstrated her strong skills in this position, having already completed several policy documents in collaboration with consumers to a very high standard in her relatively short time at the Network. In July 2010 Leli and Sarah began a job-share trial where they each share the policy and consumer representative coordinator roles. This move has proven worthwhile as the roles were so tightly linked before it was difficult to do one without the other. They are now both known as Policy and Participation Coordinators.

February 2010 was a difficult month for the Network. We were shocked by the unexpected death of our friend and colleague, Michael Firestone, due to heart-related illness. Michael was a powerhouse of information that everyone had come to depend on in some way or another throughout his time at the Network. He and his work are greatly missed and we are all very glad to have spent just a little time with such an extraordinary young man.

A little later in February the Network recruited two new staff members, although the procedures had begun early in January;

Keah Woodgate joined the Network as Administration Officer and, while only here for a very short period each week, Keah has helped to improve office systems and continues to do so. There is still a lot to be done in this area but between Keah and I things will continue to run more smoothly as time goes by; and

Stephanie Shu-jen was recruited as Community Education Coordinator with project funds to work in collaboration with consumers to build the Network's own self-advocacy and consumer advocacy courses. The completed training is known as Advocacy and Representation Training (ART) and is becoming well sought after training for consumers and others interested in learning in this important area. The Self-Advocacy component is well formed, having been run six times since Stephanie began work at the Network. The first pilot of the Consumer Advocacy component is now complete and is an important step towards the finalisation of this much needed training. The graduation for all of 2010's participants is due to take place at the end of November 2010. Stephanie will become a permanent staff member of the Network on 01 December 2010 after finding enough funds to continue to role permanently within our core funding budget. Stephanie was assisted in her work by Sheryl Pedashenko, a skilled student researcher in her final year at the University of Canberra.

The Network is sad to say good bye to Vicki da Silva who has held the role of Administration Worker over the past four years. We know we will continue to see Vicki from time to time and with her all the best in her future endeavours.

We are now feeling like we are in a strong position to continue our valuable work for and with consumers. We will continue throughout the coming year as a strong, cohesive team to meet Network goals and aspirations for the future.

Policy and Projects

As mentioned above, I am pleased to report that the Network has had a good increase in Consumer Representatives this year meaning that our pool of reps is less over-loaded due to being able to share the representative load over a greater number of reps. The number of representatives is expected to continue growing following the recent completion of the first Consumer Advocacy course and we look forward to welcoming new representatives with their vast knowledge and experience throughout the year. Consumer Representatives are strong advocates for consumers who ensure the consumer perspective reaches the highest levels of state government and the community and we recognise their hard work and efforts in this area. A list of committees on which the Network provides consumer representation is included below in this Annual Report.

In February 2010 the Network provided a response to the *Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994 (ACT)*: Options paper outlining our preference for a move to capacity-based law around the issue of mental unwellness. This preference was due to the need for strong reform in the area whereby known consumers are not unfairly

targeted in the health system but are considered equal to everyone else by ensuring fair and equal treatment.

Our submission for the National Recovery Principles in March 2010 centred predominantly on some of the terminology and other wording within an otherwise well-rounded document. There is a very high need for these Principles both for consumers and in the sector. The Network has had a strong focus on recovery and recovery-based models in recent years and consumers have reported the importance of continuing strong work in this area.

In April 2010 we lodged a submission for the draft Preliminary Models of Care for the Adolescent & Young Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit (AYAMHIU) and the Secure Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit (SAMHIU). As the plans for these two units continue to grow it is becoming ever more important for the Network to step up to monitor the progress of the units themselves and the models of care within them. Consumers have expressed a strong need for these two units to be human rights compliant and as we become more involved in the processes involved it is possible to have this need met as far as possible.

The July submission to "*Daily bread, income and living with mental illness*" provided advice and information from a consumer perspective discussing income-related difficulties faced by people with mental illness and their families. Many consumers face financial difficulty for widely varying reasons and it is important that these reasons are acknowledged and acted upon in order to improve this area of need in the coming years.

The Network continues to work strongly toward a peer identified workforce whereby adequate supports are put in place to make work places 'consumer friendly'. One of the tools utilised this year was the provision of comments on the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum's Consumer-Carer Identified Workforce Statement. The Network believes all workplaces should ideally be set up in such a way that any employee experiencing difficulty related to mental ill health can receive the support they need, regardless of the circumstances of their illness. Further, we believe it is important to have consumer identified positions in order to heighten awareness in the community where consumers are often overlooked for positions they are qualified to hold. Hopefully there will come a time when this is no longer needed however we recognise the difficulties that currently case consumers joining the workforce.

In October 2010 the Network responded to the proposed name of the restructured mental health division within ACT Health. The linking together of a number of marginalised groups, including a section name that reflected these groups is of concern to the Network as it further stigmatises many individuals who are already greatly devalued in our community. While the Network does not have specific concerns with the linking of the services, we are strongly opposed to the naming convention which places emphasis on the issues individuals face, rather than on the individuals themselves or upon their recovery paths relating to these issues.

Further to the policy responses above, we are very pleased to have created a new line of brochures reflecting the current programs of the Network, as well as providing outlets for individuals to provide feedback regarding their experiences using health and other services.

The Network's Committee and Staff have worked hard with Octo Consulting in order to form the 2010-13 Strategic Plan. This extremely important document will pave the way for the Network to grow stronger in key areas and aim toward better outcomes for consumers throughout the system. I'd like to send out a big thank you to Kate Hayes and her assistant Dee who have worked hard to make this document what it is and for helping the Network to set achievable goals to carry us strongly into the future.

I am pleased to report that our requests for more workspace have finally been granted! Following the 2010 Annual General Meeting the Network office will close for the year to allow time for staff to pack, move, unpack and arrange the Network into a much larger office just around the corridor from where we are currently. Thanks to the Griffin Centre Management it is very likely that we will be able to move our physical address with is so that our address stays intact and our many publications and business aids will remain correct. We look forward to holding a grand reopening early in the new year and will publicise this event through our December Newsletter and other media, and hope to see you there.

Finally, I'd like to send out a huge thank you to our members who have provided the much needed input to respond to representative work and policy areas. We encourage those who have not yet found the time to contribute to consider doing so this coming year. All contributions are valued no matter how big or small – whether it is lodging a submission for an upcoming newsletter, attending training, becoming a consumer representative or a variety of other ways.

I thank you all for your continued support of the Network and look forward to working with you over the coming year.

Yours sincerely



Dalane Drexler
Executive Officer

FINANCE REPORT

ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc. ended the 2009/2010 financial year with a deficit of **\$29,588**. Income for the year was **\$274,406** and total expenditure was **\$303,964**. This deficit is largely due to the late notice provided by ACT Health, after funds had already been committed, that they would be seeking a refund of the previous year's surplus of **\$19,758**. Net assets for ACTMHCN as at 30 June 2010 were **\$47,662**.

In FY2009/2010 the Network recruited additional staff in line with the increased level of core funding from ACT Health. The Network recruited a new Consumer Representatives Program Coordinator - Ms Sarah Stringer - in July 2009, a new Policy and Development Worker - Ms Leliana Setiono - in January 2010 and a new Community Education Coordinator - Ms Stephanie Shu-jen - in February 2010. Ms Keah Woodgate was also recruited in February 2010 to complement the administrative support already provided by Ms Vicki da Silva. After the departure of Mr Simon Viereck in July 2009 a new Executive Officer - Ms Dalane Drexler - was appointed in October 2009.

The Network was also able to fund ACTMHCN Members to attend the 10th International Mental Health Conference, the 19th TheMHS Conference and the Inaugural COPMI World Conference.

Sarah Stringer
Finance Officer

CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVE PROGRAM REPORT

The Network continues to support the consumer voice on committees across Mental Health ACT and other related areas. The Network provides mechanisms for the nomination, selection, training and ongoing support and accountability for those in this role. Regular Consumer Forums were held to share information, experience and to identify common policy themes.

We wish to thank the following Consumer Representatives for their valued contribution to raising awareness of the needs of Mental Health Consumers and advocating for improvements to services and programs in the ACT:

Stephanie Bassingthwaighte	Julia Bocking	Philip Brown
Peter Dwyer	Kerry Fry	Bradley Foxlewin
Patricia Green	Colin Hales	Sarah Howard
Adele Lewin	David Lovegrove	Hannah McAlister
Maureen McInerney	Irma Norris	Sarah Shepherd
	Jane Williams	

-
- **ACT Council of Social Services** ACT Community Coalition on Corrections
 - **ACT Council of Social Services** ACT Women and Prisons
 - **ACT Council of Social Services** Peaks Meeting
 - **ACT Division of General Practice** Mental Health Advisory Committee
 - **ACT Health** Acute Adult Inpatient Unit Executive Reference Group
 - **ACT Health** Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit Executive Reference Group
 - **ACT Health** Adult Secure Mental Health Inpatient Unit Executive Reference Group
 - **ACT Health** Consumer and Carer Participation Framework Working Group
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Assessment Unit User Group
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Project Control Group
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Services Plan Steering Committee
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Week Planning Committee
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Services Plan Strategic Oversight Group
 - **ACT Health** Mental Health Services Plan Strategic Oversight Group Executive
 - **ACT Health** Transcultural Mental Health Network
 - **AWARE Dogs** Mental Health Assistance Dogs in the ACT
 - **Calvary Mental Health Patients** Safety Committee
 - **Catholic Care** STEPS Youth Step-up/Step-down Steering Committee
 - **Community Development Network** Working Group
 - **Corrections ACT** Alexander Maconochie Centre Community Reference Group
 - **Mental Health ACT** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group
 - **Mental Health ACT** Advanced Agreements Working Group

- **Mental Health ACT** Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Clinical Review Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Community Sector Review Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Forensic Working Group Review Advisory Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Housing and Support Initiative Advisory Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Mental Health Act Review Advisory Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Mental Health Recovery Group ACT
- **Mental Health ACT** Policy Review Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Professional Development and Training Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy
- **Mental Health ACT** Psychiatric Services Unit Continuum of Care Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Publications Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Risk Management Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Seclusion and Restraint Review Meeting
- **Mental Health ACT** Seclusion and Restraint Working Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Strategic Executive Meeting
- **Mental Health ACT** Suicide and Self-harm Reference Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Suicide Prevention Working Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Smoking Policy Implementation Working Group
- **Mental Health Council of Australia** National Consumer and Carer Forum
- **Mental Health Community Coalition (ACT)** Sector Development Reference Group
- **Mental Health Community Coalition (ACT)** Board of Governance
- **Mental Health Community Coalition (ACT)** Consumer and Carer Caucus
- **Private** Mental Health Consumer and Carers Network (Australia)
- **St. Vincent de Paul** Compeer Program Advisory Group
- **Women's Centre for Health Matters** Women and Mental Health Working Group
- **Young Women's Christian Association** Well, Able and Mobile (WAM) Steering Committee

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S REPORT

PROJECT AIM

To create a course in consultation with mental health consumers that would enhance self-advocacy and consumer advocacy skills in order to develop the Network's Consumer Representative Program.

PROJECT HISTORY

Members of the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network expressed strong interest in the Network establishing an educational program that would support consumers to enhance their self-advocacy skills and to prepare consumers for practicing consumer advocacy as a Network Consumer Representatives. The completed program was named Advocacy and Representation Training, commonly referred to as 'ART' and incorporates both self-advocacy and consumer advocacy components.

PROGRAM OUTLINE

Module 1: Self-Advocacy

Components:

1. Introductory Session
2. Self Esteem
3. Self Expression
4. Self-Confidence
5. Self Reliance
6. Self Determination
7. Self Development

Module 2: Consumer Advocacy

Components:

- 1: Consumer Advocacy: "... and ACTION!"
- 2: Consumer Advocacy: Challenging the Challenges
- 3: Consumer Advocacy: The Discipline
- 4: Consumer Advocacy: A Map of Democracy
- 5: Consumer Advocacy: Engaging with the system
- 6: Consumer Advocacy: Mental Health Literacy
- 7: Consumer Advocacy: Recovery Principles

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Conferences and Training Attended

- Prisoner's Aid Orientation
- The 10th International Mental Health Conference (Gold Coast)
- Ron Coleman Developing Peer Workers Training
- AVP Non-violence Training (Sydney)
- The Mental Health Services Conference (Perth)
- MHCA World Mental Health Day Press Club Luncheon
- Inaugural COPMI World Conference
- Co-morbidity Chronic Health Forum
- MHCA Grace Groom Memorial Lecture
- OzHelp ASIST and SafeTalk
- Mental Health First Aid
- Ron Coleman and Karen Taylor Recovery Training
- Human Rights Training
- Mental Health ACT Training Courses
- Social Role Valorization Training
- HCCA Consumer Representative Training

Drop-Ins

In the latter half of 2009 the Network held fortnightly forums on areas of interest including mental health programs and policy areas directly impacting on consumers. The following forums have been held:

- "The Depression and Anxiety Consumer Research Unit (CRU) at ANU: What do we do?"
- The 10th International Mental Health Conference, 2009
- The 19th Mental Health Services Conference, 2009
- ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Consumer Representatives Program
- What does the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network do and why?
- Stigma Research
- Looking at Grief and Loss from a Kaleidoscope of Perspectives
- The new ACTMHCN Committee for 2009-2010, 'What we want from the ACTMHCN in 2010'

In the early part of 2010 the Network experimented with holding Drop-Ins at difference locations in the ACT. During these Drop-Ins discussions were held about the activities of the Network including the introduction of the new Self Advocacy and Consumer Advocacy Courses. Drop-Ins were held at the Tuggeranong Community Centre, Woden Youth Centre and the Belconnen Community Centre as well as the Civic Griffin Centre. The new locations for the Drop-Ins did not attract new members to these forums and therefore it was decided to return to the Civic Griffin Centre.

Joint Forums and Partnerships

ACTMHCN, MHCC and MHACTION: Quarterly Consumer, Carer and Community Forum

- Recovery Planning and Practice
- Consumer and Carer Participation
- Employment and the Recovery Journey
- Mental Health Consumers and the Criminal Justice System

ACTMHCN and Mental Health Recovery ACT: Hearing Voices fortnightly Support Groups.