



# **ANNUAL REPORT 2006-07**

**21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2007**

**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**

# 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 ACTMHCN;
- 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;
- To govern the ACTMHCN in a responsible and sustainable way.

## Committee 2006-2007

Stephen Price	Chair
Jane Williams	Deputy Chair
Jacqui Joyce	Secretary
Catherine Settle	Assistant Secretary
Charmaine Honey	Treasurer
David Lovegrove	Assistant Treasurer
Phillip Brown	
Kerry Fry	
Michael Firestone	
Patricia Green	
Simonette Benedictos	

## Staff

Prue Borrman	Manager	(resigned April 07)
Simon Viereck	Executive Officer	(commenced June 07)
Warren Turk	Bookkeeper	
Ines Pintos- Lopez	Office Manager	
Vicki de Silva	Administrative Officer	

## Chair's Report 2006-07.

In this last year, the Network has matured as a respected player in both the ACT mental health sector and the wider community. This has been largely due to the legacy of the last two to three years of hard work and the consolidation of the reform this year. The Network is now influential in all major decisions involving policy, resources and operation of government services directly affecting our community. We hold similar influence, when we can spare the attention, in the community mental health provider sector. We have learnt that meaningful processes from conception to fruition can often take periods of two to three years, often longer. This is why the Network is important to mental health consumers lives. It is a collective that will go beyond the efforts of one or two players and be a repository for the political, clinical and social aspirations of our people. It will sustain these efforts, till hopefully sometime in the not too distant future, it is no longer necessary. For the Network in the last year, it has been a time of achievement, consolidation and some disappointments.

There were two processes that have not yet achieved levels of progress that I had hoped; these have been the review of the ACT Mental Health (Treatment and Care) 1994 Act and the Review of the ACT Mental Health Services Plan. On both fronts the Network put considerable resources and efforts in representing consumer interests. We believed both were opportunities to transform the way mental health is viewed, practiced and received in the ACT.

The Networks efforts on the review of the Act started on a very solid foundation of our position paper, "With us, not to us". Considerable thanks must go to all who contributed to this paper, especially David Plant, our contracted consultant. This paper gained favourable responses from the Minister, and was a solid tool in the RAC (Review Mental Health Act) Steering Committee process.

Our position on Advanced Directives has up to this point been largely respected. This mainly corresponds to the legislation current in New Zealand. If our position is incorporated in ACT'S new Act we will be the envy of consumers in Australia.

In other areas of discussion: Contrary to the status quo, we believe in a narrower therapeutic definition of those who come under the power of the legislation; not a catch all Act for all of societies' 'difficult' people. Some progress has been made on a separate Forensic Act for a more humane treatment of our people caught up in the criminal justice system. We have fought hard for positive powers in the Act ; particularly the Government's legislative responsibility to provide people in distress appropriate assistance and care before depriving liberty and enforcing treatment. At this stage, these developments are yet to be put through the lens of the ACT Human Rights Act.

In June, the Review process was left up in the air through the unforeseen circumstances of the withdrawal of the contracted consultants. We understand the new consultants will be ready to continue the process next year.

For the Network, the other important process of the year was the review of the ACT Mental Health Services Plan. We believe this document could be the start of a consumer centred mental health infrastructure, in environments where we feel safe, and receive the assistance for all of us to lead full lives as citizens. Many members will remember a forum with KPMG Consultants last November, along with other stakeholders. This was the last time that the process has been public. The Network along with our colleagues, the Mental Health Community Coalition, has been putting forward the position that we need to totally transform the basis of the ACT Mental Health System. We believe currently too many resources are being put into crisis and acute services to the detriment of early intervention and community based clinical services. This, in our analysis, has resulted in a revolving door response to our people's needs without sufficient long-term impact on all consumers' lives. We also believe the future of 21st Century Mental Health lies in the social support models of care. This has been shown to be very effective, if we look across the Tasman Sea to New Zealand's considerable success, with 30% of their budget being allocated to community mental health sector, providing social support, employment and mental health promotion services. It would be fantastic for us to follow suit and indications are that we are being heard very favourably on this point.

In the same month of June, there was a consensus amongst representatives on the Steering Committee that KPMG was failing to perform its task to our satisfaction. We therefore agreed for the remaining work to be done 'in house' by ACT Health. We may have been very naïve, as the process went to sleep. Recently, the Network has made strong presentations that this process is urgent to the needs of our people, especially considering the political cycle of the ACT election next year. The Network is now represented in a task force setup, along with our colleagues from the Coalition and ACT Health, to knock together a public draft of all the work done so far. Hopefully, everybody will have access to this plan before the year is over. Next year I believe we need to promote great urgency and resources for the completion of this very important document.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2007, Health Minister Katy Gallagher signed off and launched "Consumer and Career Participation across Mental Health ACT: a Framework for Action". This was the culmination of a significant effort on the part of the Government to see participation from 'our' point of view. In the past we have always had to conform to bureaucratic models of participation, gratefully receiving 'attention from on high.' After the 50-bed ward situation last year, Mental Health ACT came to the Network asking us and other stakeholders how we should do it from now on. After many meetings, Prue Borrman had drafted our response in the position paper "Come to the Table", last year. This response had considerable impact on the Government document. A special note of credit should go to Mental Health ACT Policy officer, Jane Pepper for letting us go back to the drawing board on more than one occasion in order to understand our perspective. This is not a perfect document but in my judgment is one of the most effective tools for the Network to be a body of important influence within Government on decisions that fundamentally affect our people. It also gives important recognition to the growing relevance of consumers working in other fields of the mental health sector. The best compliment to this document is that

every other health consumer group of the ACT want to follow this model, which is happening currently. Considerable credit should go to Mental Health ACT and the Minister.

Significant in the life of the Network has been the contribution of our past manager, Prue Borrman. Prue accepted our invitation to be manager in September 2005. The organization had changed its direction, methods, and its framework for approaching its role of defending and promoting the interest of mental health consumers. Prue provided a large share of the leadership and expertise required in rebuilding and remodelling the Network as an instrument of systems advocacy, consumer perspective and advice on how mental health services should serve us. She built an effective staff team that freed our consumer workforce to do what they do best; strategic direction, policy, system advocacy and consumer representation. Her influence in representing the Network's interests and establishing our policy positions has been crucial to our successes. The many position papers that have been generated in our office manifest her industry. Sadly, Prue indicated she needed to move on early this year. Prue left the Network in March 2007, leaving a sound and effective advocacy organization. Our gratitude is profound.

In May 2007, it was our pleasure to welcome aboard Simon Viereck as the Network's new Executive Officer. Simon hit the ground running yet he swiftly and diligently grasped the essentials of his job. Simon came with a background of working with people with a disability, and also a working knowledge of government processes. Simon's wise counsel has been invaluable in various important negotiations this year. He brings with him a sense of renewal and promise for the future of the Network.

In December, our office manager Inez Pintos-Lopez will be leaving us for the tango halls of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Inez' success as our admin magician is that everything seems to magically happen: Our committee papers turn up at the right time, the Newsletter appears in our letterbox full of great content, our representatives are reminded when and where to appear, all without any apparent effort! The Network will sorely miss her grace and diligence. We wish you well in your future endeavours.

Thanks must also go to Vicki de Silva, our other part time admin officer, for her enthusiasm, industry, spirit and human kindness in the form of an often much needed cuppa!

Amongst the lessons that I have learnt this year, are how 'reasonable' expectations of working in this field of advocacy and representation, falls short of the efforts that we have expended in the pursuit of the Network's goals. Last year some of us burnt the candle at both ends, both staff and volunteers expended too much passion and hard work. We paid the price. Significant members of the Network suffered various degrees of burnout and bad health. We need to innovate new effective means of advocacy and representation that does not cost our most important resource, our people. We have made submissions to Mental Health ACT that the Network needs more capacity to employ support staff to fulfil the vital roles of recruiting, training,

supporting and mentoring consumer representatives of the future. I also hope there will be enough capital left over for more position papers.

It has been my pleasure to lead one of the best committees that I have been a part of: Some committee members may blink in astonishment at this view, but I am genuine. Creation in my experience is the best when different points of view come together in respect, passion, challenging debate, and most often, a meeting of minds. This process, in my opinion leads to better decisions. This committee has been diligent in its responsibilities, and most importantly we look after each other. Special appreciation goes to my deputy chair, Jane Williams, who helped draft this report. She is a focused and passionate advocate who provided me with grounded wisdom, humour and filled my shoes on many occasions this year, when I was unable to do so. I would not have lasted the distance without her. Jane is a much better chair of meetings than I will ever be!

Thank you all.

Stephen Price, Chair

## Executive Officer's Report

The last year has been challenging, but productive for the Network and challenging, but enjoyable for me. I began working at the Network in April in a temporary capacity and was fortunate enough to be offered the position permanently from June 2007. This means that I have needed to spend considerable time finding my way into the organisation while simultaneously being called upon to support consumer representatives in a number of high-level processes. This has been challenging, but also very exciting.

Since beginning work at the Network I have been working with the office staff to improve some of the internal procedures and processes in the office. I have also worked with the Management Committee and staff to address issues of organisational capacity and respond to mental health system policy challenges. In this respect the Network faces some important challenges. Ensuring adequate resources to co-ordinate and develop the Consumer Representative Program is an urgent challenge, not least in the light of the launch of the Mental Health ACT Consumer Participation and Carer Participation Framework and the increased demand for consumer representative services this brings. The Network will need to increase its capacity to recruit and train consumer representatives as well as develop consumer policy positions. While the Network also has broader aims in respect of supporting members and working for the interests of the consumer constituency in the ACT, the consumer representative work is the Network's core business at this time and additional resources are needed to facilitate the Network's important role in this area.

Another important aspect of the Network's role in the sector, which has been further developed since I joined the Network, is our strategic collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly the Mental Health Community Coalition. The two organisations have worked closely together in several areas and I am confident that close collaboration brings a new dimension of expertise and credibility to the work of both organisations.

I would like to thank the Management Committee for their commitment and dedication during 2006-07. Every member of the Committee has brought important knowledge, experience and passion to the Network and the Committee has been prepared to challenge the conception of "business as usual" within the Network and work towards innovative approaches to the work, while ensuring the continuity and stability necessary for an organisation like the Network. Many committee members have also contributed their expertise as representatives and to provide me with feedback, advice and guidance in my role.

I would especially like to thank David Lovegrove, Stephen Price and Jane Williams for providing excellent leadership for the Network over the past year and for giving me invaluable help, support and guidance in my first months with the Network. I have learnt a great deal from them as well as other committee members and Network members. Another special thank you to Michael Firestone for not allowing me to focus narrowly on any one area of the Network's many commitments. He has also taken a leading role in liaising between the Network and the Consumer and Carer Caucus. Thanks also to all the representatives who have contributed a valuable consumer perspective on a wide range of committees over the last year. A comprehensive list of the Network's committee involvement is included in this report.

Thank you to Ines Pintos-Lopez the Network's Office Manager and Vicki De Silva for providing an efficient, steady and welcoming office base for consumers to work from, for essentially running the office for me and teaching me what the Network office does in practice. Thanks also to Warren Turk who has provided excellent, no-nonsense financial management for the Network over the last year.

Lastly I would like to express my appreciation to the broader consumer membership, which has increased steadily over the year. The input that many members contribute with at various times and in various forums is what makes the Network the unique entity it is and the shared experiences of the membership is a more valuable source of information on mental health than any university library.

Simon Viereck, Executive Officer

## Treasurer's Report

The Network's income increased slightly due to the indexation of our HACC Grant from ACT Health to just over \$129,000 for the 2006-2007 financial year. However, it proved difficult to contain expenses.

During the year the Network restructured its wage and staffing arrangements to better serve membership needs. This increased costs by approximately \$35,000.

Overall, administration costs were reduced, but not sufficiently to cover the increase in the wage costs. The reported deficit in the income statement of \$8,982 is thus primarily a result of increased wage costs and non-cash items such as depreciation.

It is important to note that a significant part of the income was expended on supporting consumer activity and support. This included consumer training, conference attendance and remuneration for consumer representatives.

This year loss on top of the loss for the previous year of \$5871 means finances will need to be carefully monitored. As the balance sheet shows the Network does not have sufficient funds in reserve to be able continue to sustain considerable losses in the coming years.

Charmaine Honey, Treasurer

## Main Policy Areas for 2006-2007

### **Review of the Mental Health Treatment and Care ACT 1994**

**Report "With Us, Not to Us"** A Submission to the Review of the ACT Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994

*Statement of Consumer Principles for a Mentally Healthy Community*

The Review of the Mental Health Treatment and Care Act (1994) was identified as a significant area of work for the Network in the last year. The Network developed a report: "*With Us, Not to Us*" and a "Statement of Consumer Principles for a Mentally Healthy Community", which formed the basis of the opinions Network consumer representatives expressed in the Review of the Act process. The Network was represented on the Steering Committee for the Review process by three representatives and took an active role in the Committee as well as various subcommittees. The Network focused in particular on putting Advance Directives on the agenda, on forensic issues, on consumer and carer rights, and on involuntary vs. voluntary treatment.

Towards the end of the year a draft Options Paper was developed for the Review and the Network collaborated closely with the Mental Health Community Coalition to develop a detailed response to this paper. The finished Options Paper is expected to be made public by the end of 2007.

### **Advance agreements**

As a project to feed into the Review of the Mental Health Act process the Network worked with consultants Morgan & Disney to organise a workshop for consumers and carers on the topic entitled "*I told you what I needed*": Explanations of Legal Instruments in March 2007. The Network also engaged with the Victorian Mental Health Legal Centre to bring the essence of their knowledge and experience of Advance Directives to the ACT to inform the Review of the Mental Health Act process. The work done by the Network in collaboration with other stakeholders on this issue has fed directly into the Review of the Act process and has significantly shaped the discussions of the topic within that process. In the year to come the Network is planning to do more work on the topic and will encourage consumers to develop their own Advance Directives.

### **Consumer and Carer Participation Framework for Mental Health ACT**

Mental Health ACT, the Network and other stakeholders worked closely together in a genuine participatory process to develop a framework for Consumer and Carer Participation across Mental Health ACT. The work of the Network was informed by the "ACT Mental Health Consumer Network's Response to Come to the Table", which had been developed after extensive consultation with Network members. The process was an example of genuine government and community sector collaboration and should be thought of as an example to be followed in other processes. The resulting document lays a sound foundation for the future development of consumer participation and will significantly affect the work of the Network in the future.

The final document: "Consumer Participation and Carer Participation across Mental Health ACT: A Framework for Action" was launched by Minister Gallagher on 31 July 2007.

### **Mental Health Services Plan**

**Report "*Have Your Say*"** Consumer experience of the ACT Mental Health System in the ACT

During 2006-07 the Network dedicated considerable resources to inform and seek the views of members about their experience of mental health services. The information the Network gathered through forums and a survey was used to input into the Review of the Mental Health Services Plan process through the "*Have Your Say*" report, as well as through representation on the Review Steering Committee. The issue of a new mental health inpatient facility was discussed in the Network report: "*Not just another big hospital ward*". The views of consumers on proposed new mental health inpatient facilities. This issue has also been prominent in the Review of the Mental Health Services Plan process.

The Network had also identified the Review of the Mental Health Services Plan process as a major focus for the 2006-07 year, but had to contend with long delays in the Review process, as ACT Health worked on a draft document together with the consultants and later within the department. Network representatives have repeatedly iterated that the process has not been satisfactory for consumers or other community sector stakeholders, but has also attempted to work constructively to progress the development of the draft Mental Health Services Plan.

It is hoped a draft MH Services Plan can be released to the public at the end of 2007 or early in 2008.

## Representation on Committees

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 are held to share information, experience and to identify common policy themes. Network representation on committees in the last year included:

- Mental Health ACT Strategic Executive Meeting
- Mental Health ACT Risk Management Committee
- Mental Health ACT Strategy and Action Plan Implementation Group
- Mental Health ACT Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement Committee
- Mental Health ACT Review Advisory Committee (RAC); Review of the Mental Health Treatment and Care Act 1994
- Mental Health ACT Review of Mental Health Act Forensic Working Group.
- Mental Health ACT Review of MH Act Children & Young People Working Group.
- Mental Health ACT Review of MH Act Purposes and Principles Working Group.
- Mental Health ACT Women and Mental Health Committee
- Mental Health ACT Professional Development and Training Committee
- Mental Health ACT Suicide and Self-harm Reference Group
- Mental Health ACT Consumer and Carer Framework Working Group
- Mental Health ACT Policy Review Committee
- Mental Health ACT Suicide Prevention Working Group
- Mental Health ACT Seclusion and Restraint Working Group
- ACT Health Mental Health Services Plan Steering Committee
- ACT Health Consumer and Carer Participation Framework Working Group
- Mental Health Community Coalition Mental Health Provider Network
- Mental Health Community Coalition Board
- Mental Health Community Coalition Consumer and Carer Caucus
- PSU Continuum of Care Group
- Calvary 2N Continuum of Care
- Mental Health Recovery Group
- ACT Division of General Practice Mental Health Committee
- ACTCOSS Social Health & Inequalities Committee

- ACTCOSS Peaks Meeting
- ACT COAG Mental Health Working Group
- ACT COAG Mental Health Reference Committee

#### **National Committees**

- National Mental Health Council of Australia National Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)
- Australian Mental Health Consumer Network

## **Education and Training**

### **Consumer Advocacy Training**

A total of twenty-two consumers completed the Consumer Advocacy Course developed by The NSW Institute of Psychiatry Consumer Advocacy Training. Sandi Watson delivered level two of the Consumer Advocacy Course in Canberra in July 2006 and level one of the course in April 2007. The Consumer Advocacy Training Course aims to provide consumers with an understanding of a rights-based approach to consumer advocacy and the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in service planning and policy development, represent on committees, and to understand the roles of advocates and representatives. The training assists consumers to identify and reflect on the ethical dimensions and boundaries of advocacy and representation and presents a model of consumer advocacy based on social justice principles.

This training provides an excellent foundation for those wishing to undertake representation and advocacy.

### **Narrative Gathering**

The Network began work with Narrative Gatherings in 2003 with “These are not ordinary lives” a two day gathering for consumers of mental health services. This work was continued with four gatherings in 2006. As with previous narrative gatherings there were detailed consultations with consumers and service providers shaped by narrative therapy ideas prior to the day. The key themes that emerged were stigma, dignity and intention. Both consumer and service provider attendants found the gatherings fruitful. The Network would like to continue to use the narrative approach as a way of appreciating healing contexts, connection with others and ways of embracing different hopes, values and ways of living. Our thanks also to Jane Pepper and Maret Rebane, from Mental Health ACT, and to members of the Listening Team who prepared the ground and facilitated the gathering on the day.

### **Other Training and Conferences Attended**

- VicHealth “Strengthening Mental Health and Wellbeing in our community”
- National Health Outcomes Conference Sessions attended; Achieving Better Health Outcomes for people with schizophrenia, Issues in chronic disease management
- ACTCOSS Conference Lifting the Chill
- Ron Coleman: “A Bad Career Move” Workshop for Consumers

- Ron Coleman: Workshop for Service Providers
- The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) Conference, Townsville (4 consumers attended and one Network organisational representative)
- Mental Health Showcase: Two contributions by the Network; Better General Health, Consumer Participation
- Trieste Model, Senator Lyn Allison
- Forensic Mental Health Symposium School of Law University of Canberra
- ACT Transcultural Mental Health Network Sector Meeting “The Quest for Innovation and Community Engagement: Making People our focus” Ass Professor Nicholas Proctor
- ACT Human Rights Community Forum
- Raising the Standard
- PART Training; Predicting, Understanding, Managing aggression (one day workshop)
- Governance for committee members (5 members attended training)
- Preparing for Emergencies, Communication and Resource Planning, ACTCOSS

### **Drop-ins**

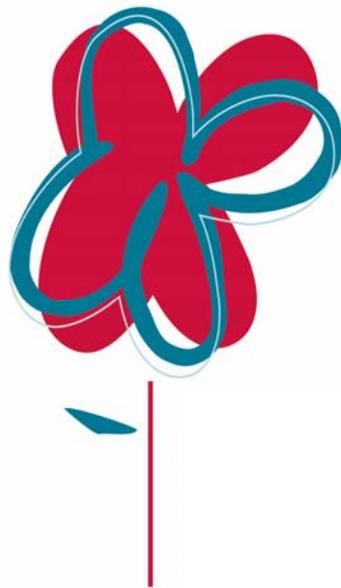
The Network holds regular fortnightly forums on areas of interest including mental health programs and policy areas directly impacting on consumers. The following forums have been held:

- Better General Health for People with Mental Illness Fiona de Lacey
- Mental Health Services Plan with Barry Petrovski Mental Health Community Coalition
- Play the Lemon Looing Game with Network Members
- Mental illness education program in the ACT with MIEACT
- Principle Official Visitor with Jan Moerkerke
- Health Services Commissioner, Phillip Moss.
- Centre for Mental Health Research, Elspeth Macdonald.
- Welfare Rights and Legal Centre, Genevieve Bolton.
- Legal Aid, Brianna McGill.

### **Joint Forums and Partnerships**

- Using Medicines Wisely Workshop, Quality Use of Medicines with Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Narrative Gathering with Mental Health ACT, Listener Team (July, September, October, November)
- Health Provider Meeting Mental Health Community Coalition
- Consumer Research Unit, Centre for Mental Health Research (initial discussions about models of consumer participation and evaluation of consumer participation)
- Mental Health Recovery Group held regularly.
- Workshop on Advanced Directives.
- Mental Health Community Coalition Community Sector Workshop
- Inaugural Quarterly Consumer, Carer & Community Forum (July 2007)

## Acting for the interests of Mental Health Consumers



Working for a future in which the well-being of mental health consumers is warmly supported by all the ACT community.