



ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11

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GOALS

- 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 2010-11

David Lovegrove	Chair
Peter Dwyer	Deputy Chair
Leni Cleaves	Secretary (until 07/2011)
Jane Williams	Treasurer
William Barreda	Ordinary Member
Stephanie Bassingthwaighte	Ordinary Member
Barry Cooper	Ordinary Member (until 12/2010)
Vicki da Silva	Ordinary Member (until 03/2011)
Kerry Fry	Ordinary Member
Phillip Green	Ordinary Member
Brendan Keen	Ordinary Member
Scott Ryder	Ordinary Member (from 03/2011)
Sarah Shepherd	Ordinary Member (03-08/2011)

STAFF

Dalane Drexler	Executive Officer
Amanda Davies	Policy & Participation Coordinator (from 05/2011)
Michelle Little	Policy & Participation Coordinator (from 06/2011)
Leliana Setiono	Policy & Participation Coordinator (until 05/2011)
Sarah Stringer	Policy & Participation Coordinator/Finance Officer (until 05/2011)
Stephanie Shu-Jen	Community Education Coordinator
Keah Woodgate	Administration Officer
Vicki da Silva	Administration Worker (until 11/2010)

VISION

More recovery for more people

MISSION

With us not to us – facilitating an environment of collaboration and mutual respect within the mental health sector wherein mental health consumers are empowered to represent, advocate and engage in policy dialogue.

VALUES

Our values reflect our guiding principles of social justice, integrity, respect, empowerment and compassion. We view our values as essential nutrients for the health of our organisation. Our values reflect what staff, committee and members expect of each other in their work together and how we work with others in our representative, advocacy and collaborative capacities.

CHAIR'S REPORT

The year 2010-11 has been an important year of consolidation and development for the Network, especially in its core work of systemic advocacy. Our dedicated staff team led by Dalane together with Leli, Sarah, Amanda, Michelle, Stephanie, Keah and Sophie, have sought to develop, expand and support our team of consumer representatives and to provide consumer advocacy and self-advocacy training. This contributes to developing a strong team of consumer activists and advocates able to collaborate in reforming and transforming the mental health system in the ACT to better meet the needs of consumers.

To this end, the Network has also made significant policy submissions and position statements to government, both in the ACT and nationally on matters of vital concern for those with lived experience of mental health issues. Through systemic advocacy means such as these, the shared and collective voice of the consumer experience and perspective is brought to decision-making tables and processes on matters that profoundly impact people's lives. Our team of consumer representatives and staff also actively do this in person, networking and working across a wide range of forums, working groups and committee meetings in the public and community sectors. Having now moved on to new endeavours, special thanks should go to Leliana Setiono and Sarah Stringer for their efforts and contribution to this work and we wish them all the best for the future. I would also like to express my thanks to all members of the Network's Committee for their commitment, work and support they showed for the work of the Network over the past year.

The Network's own move into our new office space has been a great development, not only in providing a better workplace for staff, but also enabling a specific meeting and work space for consumer members and representatives to work, network, hold meetings, and engage in conversation and training. By now having its own 'table' and dialogue space the Network is able to invite others to join us in our collaborative efforts to improve services and supports for the recovery efforts of consumers with others in the mental health and wider community and social sectors.

A more recent achievement is the Network's new revised, improved and recently adopted Constitution. Thanks go to our staff and consumer members of the working group for their efforts over several months. The Network also formally adopted and has continued to implement its Strategic Plan over this past year.

Some significant outcomes of our collaborative work over the past 18 months with ACT Health, the ACT Human Rights Commission, the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT and Carers ACT have, for instance, culminated in the recent launch of the *ACT Charter of Rights for People Who Experience Mental Health Issues*. This is a significant and unique development at a State and Territory level in Australia for mental health consumers and the wider ACT community.

Another significant outcome of collaboration by the Network and its representatives was as part of the Mental Health Community Sector Review process. Among other things, this has led to establishing a collaborative Peaks advisory body funded to promote and guide the development of consumer and carer led research projects and capacity for the ACT. Another important collaborative effort Network staff and representatives have continued to engage with over the past six years, but more intensely over recent months, is the work of the Review Advisory Committee and its many working groups set up to develop draft guidelines for the proposed new ACT Mental Health Act. It introduces a number of important new reforms, including the criterion of 'capacity' in decision making. Special thanks go to Amanda for her valuable and skilled contribution to the work of the working groups and in supporting my and the Network's advocacy during this intense process. An 'exposure draft' of the new Act is expected to be released for consultation in the next six months.

A significant and major outcome of sustained consumer representative work and leadership has been our ongoing and developing work with the weekly Seclusion and Restraint Review meeting at the Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) at The Canberra Hospital (TCH). This has been a difficult but vital, indeed ground breaking work over the past two years which has seen a huge reduction in the use of seclusion and restraint in the PSU ward from hundreds of incidents yearly to around 20 in 2010-11. More work needs to be done so that eventually these non-therapeutic practices can be eliminated from all mental health facilities. This work also looks at the use of confinement and restraint in other hospital settings such as the Mental Health Assessment Unit (MHAU) and Emergency Department settings as these have significant impacts on the acute ward also. This process also models a new way of collaboration that more truly enables and embraces consumer expertise, skills and leadership to co-drive and bring about transformative, cultural change in mental health service delivery practices. It proves that even in acute clinical settings such restrictive practices can be radically reduced and more recovery oriented prevention and early support practices developed. New staff training co-delivered by consumer educators has also evolved from this work. Our first ground breaking, consumer-led research work will soon be published on this Seclusion and Restraint Review process by our consumer representative and independent consumer researcher, Bradley Foxlewin. Bradley is now also Co-chair of the Seclusion and Restraint Review meeting, as well as Co-chair of the Collaborative Engagement Forum at the PSU.

Besides the use of seclusion, restraint and other restrictive practices in mental health facilities, other issues include the need for more support and advocacy services before and after entering health facilities. An ongoing but increasingly hot issue for consumers is the right of mental health consumers to be able to smoke within designated smoking areas of ACT acute mental health facilities. This is also why the Network, its representatives and members need to continue to advocate strongly and clearly on this issue. Other consumer concerns include the urgent need for more home-based support services to support independent living and participation as valued members in the community. Consumers continue to have serious concerns in their dealings with Centrelink; the low level and insecurity of financial support, and in relation to changes to

the Disability Support Pension with the related need for more flexible and more supported employment opportunities.

As Chair of the Network, I have also continued to Co-chair the Strategic Oversight Group for the implementation of the *ACT Mental Health Services Plan 2009-14*. Progress is continuing in implementing some important aspects of the Plan, including increasing supported accommodation places through expansion of the Housing and Support Initiative (HaSI) program. A new scheme of consumer scholarships for supported study is also very welcome. The proposed collaborative Model of Care for the new Adult Acute Unit is also welcome and hopefully is reflected in its design and participation practices, which consumers have already contributed to. Much work still needs to be done to implement more of this important Services Plan. From the consumer perspective areas still awaiting funding are those around the further development of the consumer sector, particularly in developing the consumer peer workforce, including peer support services, and independent, community-based peer services, and peer supervision and support structures and processes. There is much potential for investing in consumer peer skills and roles, to develop more opportunities for individual peer advocates, peer system navigators, peer educators and researchers. Peer run and or directed services is also another gap that is very much under developed and under invested in, despite good national and international evidence for their success. There is also much need to develop opportunities for new social enterprises that can offer valued work roles for consumers in ways that build on their strengths and support them in their vulnerabilities.

As the ACT's consumer representative on the National Mental Health Consumer Carer Forum (NMHCCF), I have been active in its work and advocacy for consumer issues nationally. I encourage all to check the Forum's website on the work it does: www.nmhccf.org.au. ACT Health has recently committed over \$10,000 recurrently for the Network to support consumer representation at the national level. Three other Network members are also members of the National Register of Consumer and Carer representatives, which is also supported through the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA).

On the National level in mental health a number of significant new measures and reforms have been announced in the 2011-12 Budget. Amongst these has been the commitment to re-establishing the new National Mental Health Consumer Peak organisation, which will initially be auspiced by the Consumers Health Forum (CHF) for the first two years. Only after strong advocacy by mental health consumer representatives at the national level, was an advisory group of mental health consumers nationally set up to participate in, and guide this process. Another significant development for mental health consumers, following strong advocacy and submissions, concerns the future development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme which will now include mental health consumers who have serious psycho-social disability resulting from their mental health conditions.

An important piece of new national mental health infrastructure is the announcement of

the new National Mental Health Commission. The Minister for Mental Health, Mark Butler, has made the commitment that it will include consumer and carer commission members, and will be chaired by Dr Alan Fels. Other states are also rapidly establishing Mental Health Commissions. I think it would also be an important development for the ACT to have a Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. It could greatly contribute to a more integrated and holistic public and community mental health and social support system for the ACT.

There is a strong need for an independent peer-run or directed service structure that would eventually offer a range of services for peer workers whether they choose to work collaboratively in the community or public sectors or independently as consultants. It is my hope that a pilot of such a service can be operational in the near future.



David Lovegrove
Chair

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

The 2010-11 financial year saw lots of change for the Network. We moved premises, had staff leaving and joining, and had a lot of growth in our programs areas.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to the very last ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Committee given that we will be welcoming the first Board in November 2011. Rest assured; the structure of the Board remains the same as the Committee. The name was simply changed to more adequately reflect the immense work our governing body undertakes in the management and oversight of the organisation. We look forward to a new beginning with our fresh new Constitution that has been formulated by consumers to strengthen the valuable work the Network undertakes. Farewell to those Committee members who are choosing to take a break from the governance side of the Network, an anticipated welcome to those who decide to join it, and a big welcome back to those who are re-elected.

As stated above, there has been quite a bit of change over the reporting period.

Firstly, we said a sad farewell to long-time staff member Vicki da Silva who was well-known throughout the Network and fondly referred to as our Tea Lady although in reality she was much more than this. Vicki provided a variety of support and assistance to the staff, Committee and membership of the Network. She is now living it up in sunny Brissvegas, spending time with family and having a blast. Keep those postcards coming Vix!

Following Vicki's departure we made our long anticipated move from Level 2, Room 11 Griffin Centre to Level 2, Room 11 Griffin Centre. That's right, technically we moved but on paper we still appear to be in the same place! Although confusing at first, our members and others attending our new offices are pleasantly surprised with the new space and its added functionality from the cramped space we used to occupy. Our new space are almost double the size of our previous one, and there is a large Members Area that is open for drop-in most weekdays over lunch time. It is always great to see members, new and existing, coming in, accessing the facilities, and sharing information. We look forward to this continuing into the future.

Following a steadily busy few months we then had to farewell our two Policy and Participation Coordinators, Sarah Stringer and Leliana (Leli) Setiono, in May 2010. Leli decided to make the move back into human resources which was her primary area of expertise prior to joining the Network after taking time to weigh up her career options while considering a move overseas. She continues to be our Volunteer Website Administrator, something we for which we will hopefully remain thankful for a long time to come. Sarah grappled with the idea of moving into a finance-oriented role for a long time following her achieving her Bachelor of Commerce last year before finally making the decision to do so in May of this year. We were very sad to see both Leli and Sarah go as they both added immense talent to the workplace.

Whilst being difficult on the staffing team, Sarah and Leli's decisions to leave at around the same time afforded the Network the opportunity to recruit for both coordinator roles at the same time which was helpful from a finance point of view. We were very lucky to receive applications from several high quality candidates with a variety of skills that would be of great use to the Network. Of those candidates, we were very pleased to welcome Ms. Amanda Davies whose main focus will be in the Policy and Projects Program areas, and Mrs. Michelle Little who will work mainly in the Consumer Representative Program. Michelle and Amanda look forward to continuing their valuable work with consumers in their areas of work and hope to meet many of you as their time at the Network progresses.

As Sarah also undertook the financial work of the Network, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome Lesley Hyndal of Brazen Books as our new bookkeeper. In the short time Lesley has been with us she has already gained a clear understanding of our finances and is well-equipped to handle anything that arises financially with the assistance of our Treasurer. Given the immense amount of work it takes up upkeep the Network's finances, I'd also like to say a warm thank you to the 2010-11 Treasurer, Jane Williams, who worked tirelessly with Sarah, Lesley and I through some personally difficult times.

A wealth of appreciation goes out to my amazing staffing team for the incredible work they undertake to support the Network to succeed. Alongside Amanda, Michelle and I, Stephanie Shu-jen continues to see the Advocacy and Representation Program throughout the teaching year, and Keah Woodgate remains steady in her provision of strong administrative support. Following the end of the financial year we will also welcome on board Sophie Fehlberg who will be providing additional administrative support in a junior capacity, and Samara Garrett, a second year student at the University of Canberra who will be undertaking research in our key program areas.

A big thanks also to our team of Consumer Representatives who continue to provide strong representation of the consumer voice within government and throughout the community.

You may notice that this report does not include policy and programs; rest assured this area has not been forgotten! As this program continues to grow it now warrants its own section in the annual report alongside our other program reports.

The Network continues to work toward the goals set in our 2010-13 Strategic Plan with a number of tasks being undertaken during this reporting period. Most notable perhaps is a 10% increase in our primary membership, along with several new avenues for reaching consumers including our Facebook page which has in excess of 70 'friends' and grows each week. A big thanks to William Barreda and Lyle Upson who are regular contributors to this page, bringing mental health related news to Facebook.

Another Strategic Planning task that we put a lot of work into was the upgrading of the Network's Constitution. Although much of the work toward the completion of this

document occurred following the end of the reporting period, it is of significance to note in this Annual Report as future reports will be made under the new Constitution following its official launch at the 2011 Annual General Meeting. Thanks to all the members who played such an important role in this project, without your input this work could not have been completed.

As always, I'd like to thank all the members who have contributed their vast array of experience in order to underpin the work of the Network. Lived experience remains the single most important aspect of all work undertaken by the Network so your stories are always appreciated. For anyone who has considered undertaking training, becoming a consumer representative or contributing to policy discussions there will be plenty of opportunities to do so over the coming year. We also welcome suggestions from members about how to improve and enhance our programs.

Until next time, I hope to continue to meet with more of you and to see you at the next Christmas party. Thanks again for another fantastic year; everyone involved in the Network is what makes this position so interesting and rewarding so keep up the good work!



Dalane Drexler
Executive Officer

TREASURER'S REPORT

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network for the financial year July 2010 to June 2011 ended with a deficit of \$11,000 from our core funding. This deficit is not of any great concern as it is a manageable amount and a figure that is acceptable in the financial world.

This could have been more, due to the move of the Network from its old to its new premise, thankfully on the same floor, as we were allowed to take our room number with us. This meant there was no need to change our address or phone numbers. So we could keep all our stationery and business cards, therefore nothing had to be changed. The new office, as those of you who have visited would agree, is much larger than the old office – it has a good sized Members Area which is also used as a meeting space and training room. This is large enough that it is saving the Network from renting meeting rooms from the Griffin Centre for our smaller meetings, thus will save the Network extra expense.

The extra space allowed the Network to buy new office equipment – tables and chairs, also there is a small private meeting room, as well as a coffee table and four comfy chairs for a library area within the Members Area.

The new area has three members computer workstations housing Network equipment for members to use, free of charge, which had been bought in the previous financial year. The video camera has still been very popular for recording mental health events, a project largely undertaken by Peter Dwyer – thanks Peter.

During my term as Treasurer I have been working closely with Dalane to put policies and procedures in place to make sure that the role of Treasurer in the future would be an easier process to follow. These policies were then voted on and approved by the Network Committee so there are now clear guidelines to follow for both Network members and also staff.

A really big thank you has to go to Phillip Oakes and John Stringer for their help in the electrical, computer and general fit outs of the new office/members area. A small gift voucher of \$200 each was given as small recompense for their assistance, which would have easily cost the Network over two thousand dollars and then some, as most of their work was at the weekends or evenings so as not to disrupt the office. Dalane also put in many extra hours for making sure the area was arranged and fitted appropriately.

I would also like to say a special thanks to everyone involved for all their help in moving the office to its new place. So much volunteer labour that would have cost the Network so much money, and all done with a smile too.

Unfortunately we had to say a sad farewell to three valued staff members this financial year. Firstly to Vicki da Silva who decided to make the move to sunny Queensland at

the end of 2010. She regularly sends us happy postcards which we love receiving and hope to get another soon. We very much miss her welcoming cups of coffee (and tea!)

Then more recently in mid-May we also said farewell Leliana (Leli) Setiono who worked with Sarah in the Policy and Participation Program, who wanted to get back into human relations for more experience for when her husband is to be posted overseas. Leli is still however keeping the Network website up to date, as well as building our new website, in a volunteer capacity. Thanks Leli for your ongoing assistance.

Later in May we had to also farewell Sarah Stringer who many of you knew from the Consumer Rep Program and also as the Networks Finance Officer. The call of accounting – which was her degree training, overcame the needs of the Network. Therefore, the Network employed Brazen Books to continue the accounts process with Lesley Hyndal coming on board as our bookkeeper. Sarah remains a valued member of the Network and we look forward to seeing her at Network events.

So, although we were very sad to see Sarah and Leli go, we said a welcome to Michelle Little and Amanda Davies who will work together to cover the Policy and Participation Program areas. Fortunately their hiring process ended up being almost at the same time, which from a finance perspective, cut our costs for advertising for two positions.

The Network received funding support from ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Services (ADACAS) to aid in the running of four Self-Advocacy courses within our Advocacy and Representation Training course, facilitated by Stephanie Shu-jen. These training courses have been an amazing success and proved very popular, so the Network is grateful for this funding to provide this very important training.

Among other events, we were pleased to fund two people to attend the TheMHS Summer Forum in Sydney this year, six to the 20th Annual TheMHS Conference at the Gold Coast, 15 to attend the National Press Club Luncheon with Australian of the Year Prof. Patrick McGorry, and at least 20 to the Mental Health Community Coalition's (MHCC) Inaugural Leading the Change Conference in Canberra.

I would like to extend my thanks to Dalane, our Executive Officer, for all her help and assistance in the changeover in bookkeeping. I had to have a leave of absence in that period, and Dalane just stepped up to the plate and all ran smoothly and effectively. Thanks Dalane.

I would also like to thank all the office staff, past and present for putting up with my requests for everything to be done **now** (or earlier) and all their help and support.

Jane Williams
Treasurer

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT

THE PROGRAM

The Advocacy and Representation Training (ART) course created in 2010 aimed to develop the Consumer Representative Program by enhancing the skills of consumers who wish to participate as consumer representatives.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Over the two years that the course has been delivered there has been 10 terms of Self-Advocacy, and three terms of Consumer Advocacy training. Consumers who graduate from both modules become eligible to represent consumers on government and community committees and boards, and are also eligible to co-facilitate course components.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Participants of the ART course are given the opportunity to provide feedback of their experiences of the course at the culmination of the term. These have been documented and collated for further review, and where possible comments relating to the improvement of administrative processes and course curriculum have resulted in changes to the ART course.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

ART 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

ART Module 2: Consumer Advocacy

Components:

1. Engaging with the System, In Context
2. Challenging the Challenges, Social Justice Principles
3. A Map of Democracy, Working Towards Understanding the Environment
4. Mental Health Literacy and Committee Skills
5. Recovery Principles

The Community Education program continues to grow and we look forward to reporting some new exciting ventures to you in future reports.

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 consumer representative roles. On the first Tuesday of each month Consumer Representative Forums are held to provide opportunities for Consumer Representatives and Coordinators to share information and experiences, and to identify common policy themes.

Due to the restructure of Mental Health ACT in March 2011, some committees from last year's annual report have been renamed under the new division of Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services (MH,JH,A&D). With the exception of overarching divisional committees, committees are listed as named for the majority of the reporting period.

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:

William Barreda	Stephanie Bassingthwaighte	Julia Bocking
Angela Brown	Philip Brown	Leni Cleaves
Leila Cormick	Faye Digby	Peter Dwyer
Bradley Foxlewin	Kerry Fry	Jane Grace
Patricia Green	David Harris	Sarah Howard
Charmaine Honey	Adele Lewin	David Lovegrove
Hannah McAlister	Maureen McInerney	Julie McMahon
Sarah Shepherd	Jane Williams	

Who provided representation in the following areas:

- **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 Crime Prevention and Community Safety Forum**
- **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 CADP Project Control Group
- **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
- **Community Development Network** Working Group
- **Corrections ACT** Alexander Maconochie Centre Community Reference Group
- **Mental Health ACT** ACT Charter of Rights for Mental Health Consumers Project

- **Mental Health ACT** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Reference Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Access and Acute Collaborative Engagement Forum
- **Mental Health ACT** Brian Hennessy Consumer Companions
- **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 Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Professional Development and Training Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Implementation and Evaluation Working Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Publications Committee
- **Mental Health ACT** Recovery Plan Implementation Advisory Group
- **Mental Health ACT** Seclusion and Restraint Review Meeting
- **Mental Health ACT** Suicide Prevention, Implementation and Evaluation 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 Workforce Development Steering Committee
- **Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services (MH,JH, A&D)** Executive Strategy and Business Planning; previously known as **Mental Health ACT** Strategic Executive Meeting
- **MH,JH,A&D** Information Management and Technology
- **MH,JH,A&D** Safety and Quality Committee; previously known as **Mental Health ACT** Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement Committee
- **MH,JH,A&D** Risk Management Committee
- **MH,JH,A&D Review of the Mental Health Act** Decision Making Working Group
- **MH,JH,A&D Review of the Mental Health Act** Principles and Objectives Working Group
- **MH,JH,A&D Review of the Mental Health Act** Advanced Agreements Working Group
- **MH,JH,A&D Review of the Mental Health Act** Involuntary Physical Care Working Group
- **MH,JH,A&D Review of the Mental Health Act** Technical Matters Working Group
- **Mindscapes Festival** Working Group
- **Private Mental Health** Consumer and Carers Network (Australia)
- **Woden Community Service** Transitions to Recovery Advisory Group
- **Women's Centre for Health Matters** Women and Mental Health Working Group

POLICY AND PROJECTS PROGRAM REPORT

The 2010-11 year has seen an increased focus on mental health at a national and ACT level. The Network continues to provide a strong consumer voice on policy issues through the participation of consumer representatives on committees, working with community sector partners and providing input to inquiries and consultative processes.

In March 2011 we made a submission on the draft *Charter of Rights for Mental Health Consumers* following consumer forums to discuss the draft released by ACT Health. The Network supported the draft Charter and provided some suggestions for further clarifying and strengthening the draft before its finalisation. The Network considers that the process for developing the Charter has been inclusive and we are pleased to have been involved in the Working Group along with other peak bodies.

In May 2011, the Network provided a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, which is inquiring into mental health and workforce participation. We outlined barriers faced by consumers, such as difficulties based on Disability Support Pension criteria and application processes and recommended better support mechanisms for consumers in the workforce. The Committee has not yet reported.

We also made a submission to the Productivity Commission on its draft report on the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Network argued that the NDIS should provide support for people living with mental illness, particularly those experiencing psychosocial disability. We also argued that eligibility should be based on functionality, and should support early intervention and prevention strategies.

The Network made a submission to the public consultation by the Department of Health and Ageing on the discussion paper entitled *Flexible Care Packages for People with Severe Mental Illness*. We supported a personalised approach to mental health care that would allow consumers to have access to the care that they want, when they need it, and in a way that suits them.

As reported last year, the July 2010 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 is pleased to see the increasing recognition of the desirability of a peer identified workforce and of adequate supports to ensure ‘consumer friendly’ work places. The Network has been working with other organisations in the sector towards the development of appropriate principles, strategies and practices for a peer workforce.

Thank you to all the members who were involved in these worthwhile projects.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Conferences, Training and Other Events Attended

- MHCC Leading the Change Conference
- The 11th International Mental Health Conference (Gold Coast)
- Bullying and Harassment Workshop
- Managing Bullying and Harassment Workshop
- Seclusion and Restraint Review Meeting Research Project
- Certificate IV in Business Administration
- 20th The Mental Health Services (TheMHS) Conference (Adelaide)
- TheMHS Summer Forum (Sydney)
- MHCA World Mental Health Day Press Club Luncheon
- MHCA Grace Groom Oration
- OzHelp ASIST and SafeTalk
- Mental Health First Aid
- Senior First Aid
- Human Rights Training
- Mental Health ACT Training Courses
- Social Role Valorization Training
- MIEACT Moving Minds
- Launch of Mental Health Week
- Mental Health Week
- Mental Health Trivia Night

Joint Forums and Partnerships

ACT Quarterly Consumer, Carer and Community Forums (with MHCCACT and MHACTION and Carers):

- Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation
- Supporting a Peer Workforce
- Mental Health Services for Young People

Mindscapes Festival

Mental Health Week Committee

MIEACT and 2XX Opening Minds Radio Show – quarterly shows by the Network

Self-Advocacy course co-funded by ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service

Mental Health Foundation's Rainbow – Self-Advocacy Course

Brian Hennessy House – Self-Advocacy Course

Hearing Voices Support Group