

Annual Report 2005/2006



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

Our Mission

Mental Health consumers participating, improving and changing mental health services.

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 2005-2006

David Lovegrove	Chair
Stephen Price	Deputy Chair
Jane Williams	Secretary
Leila Cormick	Treasurer (till August 06)
Charmaine Honey	Treasurer (from Sept 06)
Peter Adamiak	(Resigned May 06)
Jane Giles	(Resigned Feb 06)
Jacqui Joyce	
Kerry Fry	
Edward Wallace	
Linda Shalala	
Phillip Brown	(from June 06)

Staff

Prue Borrman	Manager	(commenced Sept 05)
Melissa Smith	Administrative Officer	(resigned March 06)
Sarah Stringer	Bookkeeper	(resigned October 06)
Ines Pintos- Lopez	Office Manager	(commenced July 06)
Vicki de Silva	Administrative Officer	(commenced April 06)

Chair's Report

For the year 2005-6, I am pleased to be able to present the Chair's Report to the AGM, my second as Chair of the Consumer Network. The past year has indeed been a challenging and difficult one for the Network, yet one also of significant growth and development as we continue to advocate more professionally and pro-actively in the interest of all consumers in the ACT region.

Significantly, 2006 has also been a watershed year for the mental health sector in Australia more generally. Mental health is hopefully now openly and firmly entrenched as a critical, ongoing policy issue at the national level as nation-wide strategies and services finally begin to be developed via the COAG process. State and Territory governments have also started to lift their commitments to investing in mental health services. There is also increasing consumer, community and professional demand for far more of these services to be tailored to consumer's social as well clinical needs, and be community based rather than crisis driven and hospital based. Our hope is that the ACT will vigorously take up its unique opportunity to become the national leader in the provision of targeted, cutting edge and innovative community based mental health and social health services for consumers and their carers - services that are geared to prevention, early intervention, recovery and social inclusion.

Over the past year the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network has clearly demonstrated that it can play a key pivotal role for the ACT in this process. We also receive feedback that the Network is now at the leading edge of the consumer movement in Australia. Indeed, we are also one of only two incorporated State or Territory Mental Health Networks in Australia that are run and governed by consumers for consumers with direct and formal accountability to them.

Since last year, the Network has continued to strengthen and broaden its organizational base. Our membership is growing, and growing in diversity, as is our associate membership from other community organizations. A significant factor in developing this organizational strength and growth has been our Manager, Prue Borrman, who has been with us now since September 2005. We are even more fortunate that she has decided to continue working for the Network. She is providing valuable leadership and support for the Network, and I am grateful for her working closely with me as Chair and with the Executive team and other Committee members and representatives. She has also built an effective and helpful office team with the valuable inclusion of Ines Pintos-Lopez and Vicki de Silva. Thanks to Sarah Stringer, our valuable bookkeeper and part of this team till recently.

As the Network continues to grow, develop and become more professional, its staff and consumer representatives are increasingly in demand by government and community sectors alike to participate in decision making committees, selection panels, collaborative partnerships, forums, and consultations that have mental health and social dimensions. Some of the significant consultations of the past year that involved consumers, consumer representatives and the Network included: MHACT's

acute facilities planning, (with the Network's paper 'Not Just Another Big Hospital Ward'); MHACT's Corporate Planning day; the CATT Review (the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team); the Review of MHACT Clinical Community Teams; the Consumer, Carer Participation project (with the Network's Response paper to 'Come to the Table'); the MH Community Coalition's workshops, including those presented by Ron Coleman on recovery.

Currently the Network is contributing to: MHACT's Mental Health Services Plan consultations and steering committee; ACT Health's Review Advisory Committee (RAC) for the Review of the ACT Mental Health (Treatment and Care) Act 1994. The Network has just completed a significant consumer process and response paper, 'With Us, Not To Us', consumer perspectives and principles as our first formal response to the Review of the Act discussion paper.

These are just some of the activities that highlight more and more how the Network has been able to articulate and facilitate the uniqueness of the consumer voice and the consumer perspective in a variety of forums and in coherent and consistent ways.

However, to meet even current representational needs and demands on the Network, we urgently need a manager dedicated to coordinate and develop the consumer representative, participation and community development program. That person could also conceivably support the proposed Consumer Advisory Meeting recommended in Mental Health ACT's Consumer & Carer Participation Project ('Come to the Table'). The Network's experience, especially over the past year, also highlights the urgent need for a dedicated policy and research coordinator so that we can sustainably produce quality policy position papers based on documented consumer experience, research and feedback. Again, this would be a vital step in further acknowledging and reflecting the significance and centrality of consumer focused mental health services in the ACT.

Since July 2005 the Network has also continued to take the training needs of its consumer representatives into its own hands, by providing formal Consumer Advocacy training for about 25 consumers, uniquely provided through the NSW Institute of Psychiatry. In the process we have examined consumer advocacy principles and ethics as well as models of consumer participation that more closely reflect our own individual and collective experiences. The Network has lived and has now more consciously adopted the 'involvement and understanding', and 'deep dialogue' practices that more truly enable wider consumer participation both for 'self-advocacy' as well as for systemic advocacy.

In a variety of ways, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network seeks new opportunities to collaborate in partnership with government and community sectors to improve systems and to provide better services in the interests of consumers.

David Lovegrove, Chair

Manager's Report

It has been a most enjoyable and challenging year for the Network. Since I began at the Network in September I have been working with the Management Committee and staff to both build up organisational capacity and respond to mental health system policy challenges. The most important and urgent issue for the Network is ensuring adequate resources to co-ordinate and develop the Consumer Representative Program and capacity to develop consumer policy positions based on the lived experience of mental health consumers. The Network is committed to providing support and training to consumers involved in participation work and in ensuring a healthy workplace. This is fundamental to the Networks approach and with increasing demands needs to be adequately and appropriately resourced.

In 2005-06 the commitment and dedication of the management committee directed our efforts to support consumers to meet many representation, systems and advocacy challenges identified by members. Other policy and advocacy challenges have also come unexpectedly to the door including the plan to build new inpatient facilities at the Canberra Hospital site and closing Calvary's inpatient facility 2N.

David Lovegrove and Stephen Price have provided excellent leadership for the Network over the past year. As some one new to mental health I have learnt a great deal from the committee and have appreciated the collegiate approach developed and encouraged among members. Thanks to all the representatives who have contributed a consumer perspective on committees over the last year. This has covered many areas across mental health including: MHACT risk management and strategic executives, clinical practice and quality improvement, suicide prevention, women's health, seclusion and restraint, Mental Health ACT policies, recovery, transcultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committees. A comprehensive list of the Network's committee involvement is included in this report.

Thank you to Ines Pintos-Lopez the Networks Office Manager and Vicki De Silva for providing an efficient, steady and welcoming office base for consumers to work from and for the organisation to develop and do its work. Appreciation also to Sarah Stringer who has provided excellent financial management for the Network over the last year and welcome to Warren Turk who has taken up this work for the Network. Thanks to Jessica Café who worked for a short period on developing a new newsletter format with a strong policy focus.

The broader consumer membership which has increased steadily over the year, have shared their experiences of the mental health system in many forums, consultations, training and policy forums. Thanks to those who have worked behind the scenes at the Network and contributed to research, data entry, website development and the development of surveys and policies. All of these contributions are valued and appreciated and help the Network to continue its valuable work.

Prue Borrman, Manager

Treasurer's Report

The Network received a grant income from Mental Health ACT of just over \$124,000 for the 2005-2006 financial year. The reported deficit in the income statement of \$5,871 is a result of non-cash items such as depreciation, annual leave provision and web-site development. The cash flow statement reports a figure of \$5,450 from operating activities.

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. It also included support to develop policy positions on key areas identified by Network members.

The balance sheet shows the Network is in a healthy financial position with an accumulated surplus of over \$30,000. The 2005-2006 grant and underspend from the previous financial year of approximately \$16,000 are fully acquitted.

Leila Cormick/Charmaine Honey
Treasurer

Policy Areas and Reports for 2005-2006

Mental Health Inpatient Facilities

Report *"Not just another big hospital ward"* The views of consumers on proposed new mental health inpatient facilities

The Network undertook a significant consumer consultation with the support of Mental Health ACT in relation to the proposed inpatient facilities. Consultants Morgan and Disney facilitated three consumer forums to seek views about the government's proposal to build a new 50 bed inpatient facility at The Canberra Hospital site and to close Calvary inpatient ward 2N. The Network received overwhelming feedback from members opposing the proposal to build the new facility as a 50 bed unit combined with the closure of Ward 2N and supported a compromise position of a new 30 bed acute unit with 2N remaining open until the options could be considered as part of the Mental Health Services planning process.

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 formed a Steering Committee of members and friends to develop a response to the Review discussion paper that included consultation with consumers. A comprehensive response has been developed including a Statement of Consumer Principles for a Mentally Healthy Community and a detailed submission addressing questions in the discussion paper.

Consumer and Carer Participation Framework for Mental Health ACT

Report *ACT Mental Health Consumer Networks Response to Come to the Table* A proposed model for effective and genuine participation of consumers and carers across Mental Health ACT

Mental Health ACT released a discussion paper “*Come to the Table: a proposed model for effective and genuine participation of consumers and carers across Mental Health ACT.*” The Network worked closely with members to develop a response to the paper and then with Mental Health ACT to finalise recommendations about the direction of consumer participation in the ACT. This has been an important area of work that describes consumer researched approaches to consumer participation such as “deep dialogue”. It recommends a framework and approach that supports and builds on current strategies that have meaning for consumers.

Mental Health Services Plan

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

ACT Health undertook the development of a mental health services for the ACT in 2006. The Network focused considerable resources to inform and seek the views of members about their experience of mental health services. Consumer Representatives attended Mental Health Plan Steering Committee as well as a number of forums to develop this plan. Dr Peggy Brown attended a Drop-in to provide an overview of Mental Health ACT. Fiona Tito-Wheatland convened an evening for consumers to envision the kind of mental health and community services that would both prevent mental health problems and support those living with a mental illness. The Network developed a survey for members “*Have Your Say: Consumer Input into the Mental Health Services Plan.*” The final plan will be completed by the end of 2006.

Seclusion and Restraint

The Network attended a conference on the “Reduction of Seclusion and Restraint’ in Sydney based on

Other areas of Policy Input

Review of Community Teams and CATT

The Network supported the facilitation of consumer consultation forums about the role of Community Mental Health Teams and the CATT Team. The information from these Reviews was to be included in the mental health services planning process.

Prevention, Promotion and Early Intervention Module for General Practice Training

The Network met with Dr Debra Rickwood to provide a consumer perspective into the development of a module for general practitioners about mental health prevention, promotion and early intervention. A pilot process with GP's will be evaluated and conducted through selected Divisions of General Practice.

Other policy forums attended by the Network members included:

- Complex Needs
- ACT Housing Consumer Forum and Housing Summit
- Un Rapporteur on Housing

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 were 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 Committee
- Mental Health ACT Executive Risk Management Committee
- Review of Clinical Services (CPQIC)
- Mental Health Official Visitors Advisory Committee
- Professional Development and Training Committee
- Suicide and Self-Harm Reference Group
- Suicide Prevention Working Group
- Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement Committee
- Transcultural Mental Health Working Group
- Collaborative Therapy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Reference Group
- PSU Continuum of Care Group
- Consumer Representation on Access Improvement Program (Mental Health Project)
- Working Party - Information pamphlet for consumers for GP's
- Calvary 2N Continuum of Care Committee
- Consumer Carer Caucus of the Mental Health Community Coalition
- ACT Mental Health Community Coalition Board
- Mental Health Providers Network
- ACTCOSS Sector Development Advisory Group meetings
- ACTCOSS Peaks Group

- ACTCOSS Social Inequalities Working Group
- ACT Division of GP's Mental Health Advisory Group
- MHACT Carer/Consumer Participation Working Group
- MHACT Policy Review Committee
- Review Advisory Committee: Review of the Mental Health (Treatment and Care) ACT 1994
- Mental Health Services Plan Steering Group

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-five consumers completed the Consumer Advocacy Course developed by The NSW Institute of Psychiatry Consumer Advocacy Training. Sandi Watson facilitated this training in Canberra in March and July while others attended the training in Sydney. The Consumer Advocacy Training Course aims to provide consumers with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in service planning and advocacy groups 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.

Lemon Looning

The Network continues to support the playing of the Lemon Looning Board Game as a tool for gaining insight into the mental health system. The Network received funding from Healthpact in 2004/05 to deliver the Lemon Looning game to service providers and health professionals in the ACT. A number of members trained to play the game and continue to meet requests received from community and professional teams. Thanks to Charmaine Honey for co-ordinating this valuable educational work for the Network.

Narrative Gathering

The Network continued the work began in 2003 with "These are not ordinary lives" a two day gathering for consumers of mental health services. The most recent gathering focused on the stories of consumers and service providers to enhance understanding between service providers and consumers. 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. Fifteen consumer and eight service providers attended. 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 to the Jane Pepper and Maret Rebane, from ACT Mental Health, and to members of the Listening Team who prepared the ground and facilitated the gathering on the day.

Other Training and Conferences Attended

- The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS): Adelaide/Townsville
- Vicserve Conference, Melbourne Victoria
- Australian Mental Health Consumer Network Conference, Melbourne
- Early Psychosis Conference: Sydney
- Reducing Seclusion and Restraint Conference: Sydney
- Mental Health Community Roundtable: Trieste Model and other community models for mental health
- “Feet on the Ground Head in the Stars” Mental Health Community Coalition and Mental Health Recovery Group
- Health Care Consumers Association; Health Professional Boards and Clinical Ethics
- Suicide Bereavement Workshop
- Suicide Prevention Workshop
- Human Rights Conference
- Community Health Services Complaints Commissioner: Consumer and carer workshop
- Introduction to Human Rights (ACTCOSS)
- Human Rights Network
- Community Development Networking Forum
- Raising the Standard
- Forensic Mental Health Forum
- Orygen Video Conference Youth Consumer Participation and Peer Support
- Social Role Valorisation (4 day training)

Drop-ins

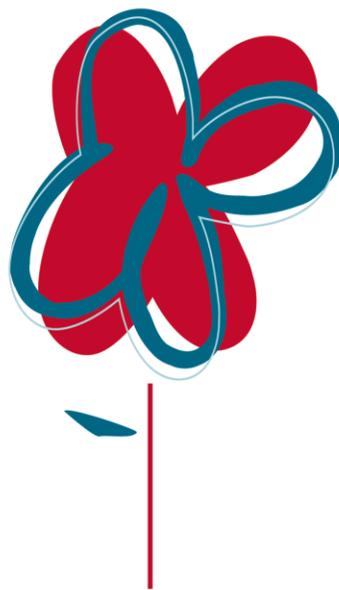
The Network holds regular fortnightly forums on areas of interest including mental health programs and policy areas directly impacting on consumers. The following forums have been held:

- Access Improvement Program; Sheryl Harrison, Mental Health ACT
- Chronic Disease Self Management Program: Janice Stewart, ACT Community Health
- The Roles of Narrative Listeners in telling and retelling the stories of those with a mental illness: Sue Todd
- Progress on the Networks position on proposed acute inpatient facilities
- ADACAS; ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service: Andrea Simmons
- Mental Health Services Plan: Dr Peggy Brown, Director, Mental Health ACT
- The Big Issue: Margo Hills
- Briefing on Changes to the Criminal Code (Mental Impairment) Bill 2006
- 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 Looning Game with Network Members
- Principle Official Visitor with Jan Moerkerke

Joint Forums and Partnerships

- Human Rights for Consumers in relation to the Mental Health Treatment and Care ACT with ACT Human Rights Office
- Inpatient Facilities Proposal: Mental Health Community Coalition
- Crisis and Assessment Treatment Team (CATT) Review: Mental Health Community Coalition
- Narrative Gathering: Mental Health ACT and the Listener Team met to progress a Gathering to focus on hearing service provider and consumer stories about stigma, caring, dignity and fairness.
- Using Medicines Wisely Workshop with the Consumers Health Forum of Australia

Acting for the interests of Mental Health Consumers



A future in which the well-being of mental health consumer is warmly supported by all the ACT community.