



A 'Once in a Generation' Chance for Carers

News

MAY - JUN - JUL 2009

Australia is often called the 'Lucky Country' yet, as many Carers know, some people in our society do it tougher than others. People living with disabilities or chronic illnesses, people with mental illnesses, Aboriginal people, older people, people from diverse cultures, and people living in poverty can often be very vulnerable to breaches of their human rights. Carers too can fare poorly under legislation, policies and practices which fail to support their health and wellbeing needs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the core values recognized internationally as being essential for maintaining human dignity and wellbeing. Australia is a signatory to many international treaties such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948*. However, there are very few fundamental human rights which are actually written into the Australian Constitution or protected by other federal legislation.

Breaches in human rights can be caused by individuals acting in harmful or restrictive ways, but they can also be caused by systemic barriers which prevent people from fairly participating in community and family life. Yet, without an Australian Human Rights Act, there are few legislatively-supported pathways at the national level which you can take to redress breaches and prevent inequitable treatment.

Only the Australian Capital Territory and the State of Victoria have

existing human rights legislation. The ACT *Human Rights Act 2004* covers a range of civil and political human rights and ensures that Territory laws must be, as far as it is reasonably possible to do so, be interpreted in a way that is compatible with human rights.

The ACT also has a Human Rights Commission which is an independent body established under the *Human Rights Commission Act 2005* to provide a fair and accessible process for dealing with complaints about discrimination, health services, disability services, services for older people, community services, and services for children and young people.

However, the jurisdiction for both the Human Rights Act and the Human Rights Commission is limited to within the ACT context. For example, an ACT resident cannot use the ACT Human Rights Act to complain about a Federal law or take action against a Commonwealth government department or agency.

The United Kingdom has had a Human Rights Act in place since 1998. Rather than creating a deluge of costly legal cases clogging up the courts, it has been evident that the Act works in a positive way by providing a guide for government services and other organizations to deliver services in a way that improves outcomes for people by respecting their human rights.

A report released by BIHR called *The Human Rights Act – Changing Lives* (www.bih.org.uk) details 31 case studies where the Act has improved outcomes for people made vulnerable by issues such as poverty, disability, or illness. In each case, the issue was positively resolved by education, negotiation and advocacy on protecting human rights instead of legal action.

An Australian Human Rights Act offers the opportunity to enact legislation to prevent human rights breaches from occurring and provide a positive framework to resolve breaches that have occurred. Such an Act could also create a positive obligation on current and future governments to actively achieve greater equity for all Australians.

The Australian Government is currently offering a 'Once in a Generation' chance for Australians to provide input whether a national Human Rights Act is appropriate for Australia and what any such act should contain. Carers ACT encourages all interested Carers to have their say on this vital issue of concern. **See page 3 for how you can get involved.**



From the CEO

Dear Members,

What a challenging few months it has been. From the tragedy of the bushfires in Victoria to the sharing of vital knowledge at the National Conference on Caring 2009, Carers ACT members and staff have been working together to improve the lives of Carers and their families both within our local community and across the country.

I was impressed by the generosity of all who contributed to the Victorian Bushfires appeal. Our dedicated team raised cash and collected practical items; from toiletries to equipment for horses.

As the economic crisis deepens, my thoughts are with all Carers and their families who may be struggling in these tough times. I urge anyone who is worried about their situation or who is experiencing increased stress to please get in touch to see how we can better support you.

Carers ACT was proud to support four Carers to enable them to attend the National Conference on Caring on the Gold Coast in March. I would like to thank Pam Beckhouse for her inspiring talk



about our Fraser House facility which supports her to care for her son, John. Thanks also to Fiona May who has written a terrific article on her conference experience, which can be read on page 10.

Carers ACT is once again delighted to acknowledge the continuing and substantial corporate support received from our sponsor G E Shaw & Associates. The phenomenal amount of \$59,000 will greatly help Carers ACT to offer the kind of special support that is not met through other funding and which is greatly appreciated by the families, such as Hope's story on page 3.

Due to the continued support of G.E. Shaw, I am pleased to invite you to sign up for the Carers Gathering 2009 which will be held in October, especially if you haven't come to an event or activity before. Please note that there is no charge for attending the Gathering.

Best regards,

Dee

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CARERS GATHERING 2009

The annual Carers Week is designed to recognize the contribution Carers make to our community. To celebrate, Carers ACT, government and corporate partners will be hosting a special overnight Carers Retreat by the sea-side. This is a time for tired Carers to relax, have fun, reconnect with friends, make new ones and spend time caring for yourself.

The Seaside Carers Gathering will take place on Sunday 18th and Monday 19th October 2009 at Eco Point, Murramarang Resort at the South Coast.

Here you will experience the wonderful shades of pristine blue from the ocean at your doorstep, towering spotted gum trees and the kangaroos that share the beach with you. The sheer beauty of this

place will captivate you from the first minute of your arrival, and stay with you for a life time.

There will be educational workshops and social opportunities including journaling, art and crafts, stress management as well as time to reflect quietly or swim in the pool or the beach. There will be a buffet dinner complete with live music and a "Seaside Celebration" theme.

Spaces will be limited and eligibility criteria will apply. Information will be posted on our website from 1 June 2009 – www.carersact.asn.au. Downloadable registration forms can be printed from the website or hard copy registration forms will be available from Carers ACT on 62969900 from 1st June.

G.E. Shaw continues to support Carers

Annual Fund Raising event raises \$59,000 for Carers

G.E Shaw & Associates has been supporting Carers ACT for 3 years now, through an annual fund raising bowls event. This year G.E. Shaw raised \$59,000 for Carers.

Each year we use these funds to support Carers in ways that our government funded programs cannot. This year we will put the funds raised toward holding our bi-annual Carers Gathering (which will be held in Carers Week this year), and to assist families which are not eligible for government funded supports and need to have a break. Here is a letter from a mother who benefited from the funds last year:

"Thank you so much Carers ACT for organising a fantastic train ride for my family. We share three beautiful boys together, of which our two youngest have Autism/Asperger's.

**THANK
YOU**

Our eldest son, Mitchell, is a Young Carer for his brothers and a phenomenal role model for them. Sammy, our youngest at 5 years old, is OBSESSED with all things Thomas the Tank Engine and anything to do with trains in general. This train ride meant the world to him and he hasn't quit talking about it since.

Our middle son, Ben (Buck) who is 8, enjoyed the day too. It brought smiles and laughs to our families faces.

I thank Carers ACT and the people that work for the organisation. Life would be that little bit more difficult without their support for our family. Thank you again

from all of us.

From Hope and family."

Carers ACT would like to thank G.E. Shaw & Associates for their continued support for caring families in the ACT.

Counselling Service – more appointments available in more areas soon!

Carers will soon have access to more counselling appointments at locations other than our Belconnen and Torrens offices.

Currently, we offer counselling sessions at Torrens and Belconnen between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday, and on Saturday mornings from 9am to 12noon at Belconnen only.

We have received some extra funding for counselling with the aim of offering more appointments in some of the health and community centres in other areas around Canberra.

We will be working to get these extra services up and running in the coming months. For more information please contact us on 62969900.

A 'Once in a Generation' Chance for Carers - *continued from page 1*

If you would like to get involved, you can:

- Go to the Australian Human Rights Commission website at www.humanrights.gov.au to learn more about Human Rights and the current consultation process
- Write your own submission and send it in to the National Human Rights Consultation Secretariat, Attorney General's Department, Central Office, Robert Garren Offices, National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600 The closing date for submissions is 15th June 2009
- Contact Annemarie Ashton, the Policy Advisor at Carers ACT on 6296 9952 or at annemariea@carersact.asn.au to provide your story (before 31st May 2009 please) on how your human rights as a Carer have been breached (or supported) in the ACT for potential inclusion into the Carers ACT submission on human rights for Carers.

Carers Calendar

May - June - July

Special Access Tours at the NGA - Soft Sculpture

Saturday 16 May 10.30am at The National Gallery of Australia.

Guided tour and viewing for people with disabilities and their Carers. No cost.

Bookings essential - call 6240 6519. Meet in Gallery foyer.

Art Appreciation Group

Meets at The National Gallery of Australia to view and learn about the various exhibitions. Carers can enjoy a coffee afterwards in the Cafe. No cost.

- 10am Tuesday 19th May
- 10am Tuesday 16th June
- 10am Tuesday 21st July

Call Lucinda on 62969949 or lucindar@carersact.asn.au to register as numbers are limited.

Day Trip to Lanyon Homestead

Take a step back in time to Historic Lanyon Homestead, Tharwa. Wander around the gardens, take a tour of the Homestead and enjoy lunch together in the café. No cost, includes transport, entry and lunch.

9:30am - 3pm Wednesday 27 May

Meet at the Belconnen Bus Interchange at 9:30am and Woden Bus Interchange at 9:50am for a chartered bus to Lanyon (platform number to be advised).

Bookings essential phone Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au by May 20th, numbers are limited.



Private viewing for Carers - Soft Sculpture

Guided viewing for Carers (meet in Gallery foyer at 10:15am). No cost.

10.30 am Saturday 30 May

The National Gallery of Australia

Bookings essential phone Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au

Carers Craft Group

Members work on their own craft items, group projects & learn new skills in a friendly environment.

- 10am Thursday 28th May
National Museum Visit, meet in the foyer of the National Museum of Australia (Lawson Crescent, Acton Peninsula) for a special guided tour of special craft exhibits .
- 9:30am Thursday 25th June
Own Project
- 9:30am Thursday 23rd July
Beading

Carers ACT, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen.

Contact Lucinda on 62969 949 or lucindar@carersact.asn.au to RSVP. No cost.

Winter Seasonal Lunch

12noon – 2pm Wednesday 10th June at the Training Room, Carers ACT, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen. No cost.

Bookings are essential, please RSVP by Wednesday 3rd June by calling Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au.

Carers Choir

Come and sing for joy! New members are always welcome.

10:00am - 11:30am every Wednesday (except during school & public holidays) in the Training Room at Carers ACT, Churches Centre Benjamin Way Belconnen. No cost. Call 6296 9900 to RSVP.

Private viewings at ANCA

1 Rosevear PI Dickson

"Journeys" is an exhibition by Elizabeth Faul reflecting on real and imagined journeys, including mixed media and collage on paper. Viewing followed by morning tea.

10:30am - 12noon Wednesday 13th May. Bookings essential phone Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au, numbers are limited.

"Dialogue" Four artists (Maxine Price, Ilona Lasmanis, Kate Hine and Anne Sawkins) explore the dialogues within their group and those arising from the friction and harmony of their works as they are positioned together. Viewing followed by morning tea.

10:30am - 12noon Wednesday 24th June. Bookings essential phone Lindy on 6296 9900 or lindyw@carersact.asn.au by June 17th, numbers are limited.

ANCA Gallery is an artist run initiative, operating since 1992 with the support of Australian National Capital Artists Inc. and the ACT Government. It aims to present a vibrant and diverse program promote visual arts and cultural development connect with local, regional and national communities.

Support Groups Diary

Northside Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Room 3, Belconnen Community Centre, Swanson Court, Belconnen.

Wed 6 May Beyond Maturity Blues
Wed 3 Jun Quality Use of Medicine
Wed 1 Jul Open Discussion

Southside Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12noon at Tuggeranong Community Centre, 245 Cowlshaw Street, Tuggeranong

Tue 12 May Beyond Maturity Blues
Tues 9 Jun Quality Use of Medicine
Tues 14 Jul Open Discussion

Male Carers Support Group

11am - 12.30pm at the Lounge, Canberra Southern Cross Yacht Club, Lotus Bay, Yarralumla

Tue 19 May Open Discussion
Tue 23 Jun Open Discussion
Tue 21 Jul Open Discussion

Mature Carers Support Group

10.00am to 12.00pm at Torrens Shops, Torrens Place, Torrens

Wed 17 June Public Trustee
Contact Isabelle on 6290 7406

Indigenous Carers Support Group

10am-2pm Boomanulla Oval, Goyder Street, Narrabundah

Thurs 21 May Lunch & Bingo
Thurs 18 Jun Lunch & Bingo
Thurs 16 Jul Lunch & Bingo

Parents of school age children with a disability

11am- 12.30pm at Carers ACT, 5/54 Benjamin Way, Belconnen
Thurs 7 May Open Discussion
Thurs 11 Jun Open Discussion
Thurs 9 Jul Open Discussion

Arab Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Tues 5 May Mental health
Tues 9 Jun Breast screening
Christmas in July

Chinese Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Wed 6 May Mental health
Wed 3 Jun Falls prevention
Christmas in July

Croatian Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at the Canberra Labor Club, Belconnen

Mon 4 May Mental health
Mon 1 Jun TBA
Christmas in July

Filipino Carers Support Group

1pm - 3pm at Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Sat 2 May Mental health
Sat 6 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Greek Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12.30pm at the Orpheus Room, Hellenic Club, Woden

Thurs 7 May Mental health
Thurs 11 Jun Breast screening
Christmas in July

Hungarian Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Polish Australian White Eagle Club, Turner

Wed 27 May Breast screening
Wed 24 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Indian Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Sat 9 May Falls prevention
Sat 13 Jun Breast screening
Christmas in July

Italian Carers Support Group

10.30am - 12noon at the Italo-Australian Club, Forrest

Fri 1 May Breast screening
Fri 5 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Polish Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Polish Australian White Eagle Club, Turner

Wed 27 May Breast screening
Wed 24 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Samoan Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Sts Peter and Paul Primary School, Wisdom St, Garran

Mon 25 May Breast screening
Mon 29 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Spanish Carers Support Group

12pm - 2pm at the Training Room, Carers ACT, Belconnen

Mon 4 May Mental health
Mon 1 Jun TBA
Christmas in July

Tamil Carers Support Group

11am - 1pm at Tamil Aged Care Home, 11 Bromby St, Issacs

Sat 23 May Healthy food prep
Sat 20 Jun Breast screening
Christmas in July

Tongan Carers Support Group

12noon - 2pm at Tongan Community Centre, Copland Drive, Spence

Fri 29 May Breast screening
Fri 26 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

Vietnamese Carers Support Group

10am - 12noon at Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre, North Building, London Circuit, Civic

Wed 6 May Breast screening
Wed 3 Jun Healthy food prep
Christmas in July

**Christmas in July
for culturally
& linguistically
diverse Carers
will be held on
17th July. Call
Emiliana on
6296 9900 for
details.**

Carers ACT Workshops

your wellbeing, understanding, coping skills

Stay On Your Feet - Falls Prevention

Falls, and their associated injuries, are a serious health issue for older people and are the leading cause of injury hospitalisation for people over 65 years of age. Falls are preventable if we take some simple precautions to reduce the risk of falling. Come along to a learning circle facilitated by Alison Meretini about avoiding falls - both for yourself and/or for your family member. No cost.

10am – 12noon Mondays, 11th May - 1st June at Training Room, Carers ACT, Benjamin Way, Belconnen

Call 6296 9900 to register



SafeTALK - Suicide Prevention

A three hour session on learning how to provide practical help to people with thoughts of suicide and preparing to be a "suicide alert helper". No cost.

6pm – 9pm Thursday 28th May

Meeting Room, Carers ACT, Benjamin Way, Belconnen

Call 6296 9900 to register

Seasons for Growth - for Young Carers aged 7 to 10 years old

A program designed to help children cope with change and loss in their lives, and build resilience and coping skills. The group aims to have fun as well as build coping skills. No cost.

4pm to 5.15pm Mondays 4th May – 22nd June at Weston Creek Community Centre, Room 1, Parkinson St, Weston.

Call Natalie on 6296 9938 to register.



Keeping Families Connected

This five week program is for Carers of people with mental illness and/or a substance dependence problem. No cost.

5.45pm – 8.30pm Wednesdays

13th May - 10th June OR 29th July - 26th August at Carers ACT Belconnen, Churches Centre, 54 Benjamin Way, Belconnen.

Call 6296 9900 to register.



New Horizons - Career Skills Program

New Horizons is a free career skills program which assists people to re-enter the workforce, commence studies or become a volunteer. Participants are assisted to set goals and write or update their resume. Other topics covered include interview techniques, how to address selection criteria and Basic Computing on applying for jobs on-line, etc.

The program begins with an individual session where career goals and participant strengths and weaknesses are discussed. Participants will then take part in a short course called "Changes in Direction". This course is held once a week for approximately 5 weeks between 9.30am and 2.30pm. The course will assist men/women to build their self esteem, set goals and compile a resume.

Following the course some workshops will be conducted on a range of topics including basic computing, addressing selection criteria and interview techniques. If required, the participants will then be given further assistance to apply for jobs, commence studies or obtain a volunteer position.

The program is conducted at the Gungahlin Community Resource Centre, Ernest Cavanagh Street Gungahlin. Childcare is provided for children under the age of 6, free of charge on site. This project is proudly funded by the ACT Government, as part of the Community Inclusion Fund

FINAL COURSE FOR 2009 WILL COMMENCE MID-MAY 2009. To book please ring 6123 4422 or 6123 4400 or email: grcsd@Gungahlin.org. You can visit the website at www.grcs.org.au.

Review of Special Education Services in ACT Public Schools

Carers who have a child with special needs currently attending a school or college may be interested to know that the ACT Government is currently conducting a review of special education services in ACT public schools.

The consultant for the review is Dr Tony Shaddock, a part-time Professor of Education at the University of Canberra with strong special education credentials. Dr Shaddock is leading a team of special educators, details of whom can be found on the review's website <http://www.actspedreview.com>

The Terms of Reference for the review are:

1. Research leading practice, both nationally and internationally, in curriculum and pedagogy for the range of students with disabilities in ACT public schools; and provide detail of how these practices improve student outcomes.
2. Provide advice on future options for the provision of Special Education Services in ACT public schools within the existing budget provision.

A discussion paper was released on the website on 25th April.

Carers ACT is asking all interested Carers to either write their own submission to tell their own story to the consultants conducting the review, or join us at Carers ACT for a group discussion on specific topics to help inform our own submission to the review. See details in the table below.

To assist with catering, please RSVP for Carers ACT discussion sessions by calling 6296 9900 ASAP. There is no charge for this activity, but places may be limited. Submissions for the Review of Special Education Services in ACT Public Schools close on 5th June 2009.

Discussion Group Title	Discussion Topics	Details
1. Transitions into Special Education	Session focuses on issues relating to early education of children with special needs, and issues for families with a newly diagnosed child with special needs	9.30-11.30 Friday 15th May Carers ACT Belconnen
2. Current Service Delivery Model and Outcomes	Session focuses on issues relating to children with special needs who are currently attending a primary or secondary public school in the ACT.	9.30-11.30 Friday 22nd May Carers ACT Belconnen
3. Transitions out of Special Education	Session focuses on issues relating to early education of children with special needs, and issues for families with a newly diagnosed child with special needs	9.30-11.30 Tuesday 26th May Carers ACT Belconnen

ACT Community Living Project

The ACT Community Living Project is an initiative of parents/carers and community members who are seeking to establish a 'village' living environment providing supported accommodation for young people and adults with a disability.

The project is in its early developmental stages and the organising committee would like to hear from parents and carers who may be interested in this accommodation and support model for their child/care recipient. They are currently circulating a survey to help measure potential demand. Please send

an email to communityliving@optusnet.com.au for a copy of the survey or for more information about the project.

Parents who may be seeking other types of supported accommodation and wish their needs to be brought to the government's attention can fill out the survey to reflect those needs. All views will be represented. All information will be de-identified before being presented to governments. Surveys can be filled out anonymously. Any queries, please call Alison McGregor on 0406 333904.

Mental Health Carers News

Mental Health Carers Representation Program

Mental Health ACT has funded Carers ACT to offer support, information and training to Carers of a person with mental illness who are participating on committees and working groups in a Carer Representational role. This includes those already participating in representational activities, or those who would like to get involved in representation.

The level of Carer Representation involvement is determined by you; and you may wish to be involved for information purposes only.

You can have your say at a focus group or become a member of a committee, working group or advisory council.

Currently, there are 15 Mental Health ACT committees with Carer Representatives. Listed below are profiles of committees who have a person representing Carer need:

Seclusion and Restraint Working Party - The role of this group is to review and update practice and procedures relating to the use of seclusion and restraint within Mental Health ACT and to ensure that it complies with international best practice.

Strategic Executive Committee – The role of this committee is to provide leadership, expertise, guidance and coordination of programs and portfolios across Mental Health ACT; and oversight the Mental Health ACT Business Plan to ensure progress against all listed actions is achieved. All Mental Health ACT committees and working groups report to the Director of Mental Health through this committee. Information relating to carer activities is reported monthly and the carer representa-

tive can report any issues of concern from carers.

Acute Adult Inpatient Unit Executive Reference Group – This group is responsible for providing expert advice on the functional requirements for the Acute Adult Inpatient Unit to be developed on the Canberra Hospital campus. This is a relatively new committee and the role includes developing the service delivery model, operational and planning principles, and reviewing planning documents prepared during the development.

Risk Management Committee - This committee oversees the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities within Mental Health ACT that serve to identify and manage clinical and corporate risk.
Carer Representative: Philip Bell

Policy Committee - to review Mental Health ACT policies and recommend endorsement or amendments. Further, it has to ensure that Mental Health ACT has a current suite of effective policies for the management of mental health services, and is developing performance measures to enhance further service delivery.

Clinical Practice and Quality Improvement Committee - To oversee the continuous improvement of all services in Mental Health ACT through the use of audits, quality improvement activities, compliments and complaints and consumer feedback. Carer Representative: Maureen Bell

Mental Health Recovery ACT – Recovery Plan Implementation and Advisory Group – The role of this group is to oversee and contribute to the introduction, use,

evaluation and ongoing development of the Mental Health ACT Recovery Plan and its associated documents. The Recovery Plan attempts to facilitate a process that reflects the Principles of Recovery (contained in the ACT Health pamphlet *Mental Health Recovery in the ACT*).

Mental Health Publications Committee - This committee is working to keep the publications updated and current. The Carer on this committee is ensuring that the Carer perspective and need are being addressed.

Professional Development and Training Committee - The role here is to oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of professional development and training activities. This is to benefit the whole mental health sector by facilitating the delivery of quality evidenced-based services.

The Clinical Review Committee - The function here is to monitor, analyse and evaluate the clinical practice relating to incidents reported to this committee, the focus being on systems not individuals. Also, to analyse generated reports from the incident reporting database and review quarterly reports. Carer Representative: Maureen Bell

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Consultative Committee – The role of this committee is to provide input to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Mental Health ACT regarding service delivery, strategic development, integration and collaboration.

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Mental Health Carers News

Mental Health Carers Representation Program

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Reference Group - The role is to provide advice and have input into the development of strategies to enhance social and emotional well-being in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT. It also aims to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and look after placement of specialist mental health staff within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Calvary Speciality Patient Safety Committee - Mental Health
The focus here is on the safety

aspects of Mental Health specific areas within Calvary precincts, namely Hyson Green, Older Persons Mental Health Inpatient Unit and the 2N Ward.

Adolescent & Young Persons Mental Health Inpatient Unit Executive Reference Group - The AAYPMHIU Executive Reference Group (ERG) is responsible for providing expert advice on the functional requirements for the Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit to be developed on the Canberra Hospital campus.

Mental Health Assessment Unit Executive Reference Group - The MHAU Executive Reference Group (MHAU ERG) is responsible for providing expert advice on the functional requirements for the interim Mental Health Assessment Unit to be developed on the Canberra Hospital campus.

Comment for any of these committee representatives is welcomed via the Mental Health Carer Representation Program Coordinator, Margaret Wooldridge. Contact can be made via email: margaretw@carersact.asn.au or phone 6296 9900.

Mental Health Carers Discussion Forum

As a direct result of the initial information forum on Mental Health Carer Representation held in November 2008, Carers ACT will now continue their commitment to consulting on Carer concerns by hosting focus groups for people caring for someone with a mental illness. One forum has already been held in March (topic: Supported Accommodation for Persons with a Mental Illness). The next forum will discuss: Carer inclusion in Treating Team for Persons with a Mental Illness.

When: 9.30am - 12.30pm Thursday 18th June
Where: Meeting Room 2, Weston Creek Community Centre, Coolamon Court, Weston.

Please note that there is no cost for participation in this forum and morning tea will be provided. Some free parking is available at this venue. RSVP is essential as each group is limited to 12 people, so please contact Lindy on 6296 9900 to register your attendance. Additional sessions may be offered if demand is sufficient.

If you would like to know more about the Mental Health Carer Representation Program, please call Margaret Wooldridge at Carers ACT on 6296 9900 or email: margaretw@carersact.asn.au

Mental Health Carer Hospital Experience Research

Do you look after a friend, family member or neighbour with a Mental Illness?
Do you support this person in their day to day living?
Has the person you care for ever been admitted to an in-patient facility in Canberra?
If so, would you like to take part in research into your experience?

Have a say on how it felt to have your loved-one hospitalised, how you felt while they were in care and what happened during the admission and discharge process.

For further information contact Denise Burton on 6230 7629 at the Mental Health Foundation ACT

All information and contact will be treated as private and confidential.

Carers are Radio Rockstars

By Fiona May

[An article from a Carer who attended the National Conference on Caring.]

Carers are radio rockstars. At least so says Richard Feidler the MC for the National Conference on Caring in Queensland during March. Richard is an ABC talkback radio host and he maintains that when carers are on the show, the feedback from the listening audience is both huge and positive. So we are the rockstars of radio!



After that heady beginning, the conference took a more practical turn but it was no less interesting for it. As a carer, sponsored to attend by Carers ACT, I need to say how much I enjoyed attending the conference and how unique it was to be at a forum like this one with a purely personal rather than professional focus. This enabled me to take fewer notes, absorb more intuitively, and reflect from a different perspective than the professionals present.

I am sure that others will do justice to the overall content of the conference elsewhere so I am going to reflect here from a more personal perspective. The points below are the messages and moments that have stayed with me. If it's in italics, I am quoting what someone said, the rest of this article is filtered through the lens of my opinion!

My daughters are young carers so I was particularly interested in the sessions pertaining to them. There were a few young carers present and while the conference didn't really cater to them I was impressed that they made sure

their voices were heard. While some people wanted to protect children from the responsibility of caring, the young carers present made sure all knew that they were proud of the caring work that they do and don't necessarily want it taken away from them. While I was there I reflected that for my daughters, their caring role is as much about what they miss out on because of a brother with a disability as it is about their active participation in caring. In the few days since I returned home however, I have observed more

closely just how much they actually do for their brother. I watched one calmly make her brother's breakfast before school the other day – her contribution to averting a threatening meltdown. At Cubs this week both girls stepped in and stood up for him when the mood of the rest of the group was cruel teasing. I am feeling very proud of them! The conference has reminded me of the important role that young carers play in families where someone has a disability – even if they aren't responsible for the physical aspects of caring.

As a carer of a child with autism I was spared some of the worst of the centrelink assessment processes but I was nevertheless pleased indeed when the Minister, Jenny Macklin announced that the approval processes for carer payments and allowance (child) will be streamlined, making the paperwork less onerous for carers, and allowing a wider range of professionals

to sign it off (including physios). All this comes in from July 1.

"It's normal to look after people but it's not normal to be put in the position of doing it 'till you drop."

We heard much about 'self directed care' and indeed it is a growing movement here. To me the key comment was that "self directed care isn't the goal – it's a means to a better life" and that means that if it isn't going to make both the person with a disability and their carers (my addition) life better then find a different way. There is no single service solution that will meet the needs of everyone. Be concerned if, as in the UK, the government seeks to move everyone on to a self directed care model.

One speaker was identifying the principles that should underpin self directed service delivery. But to my thinking these are principles that should underpin all service delivery, indeed apply to many things in life besides caring. They were:

A values framework – people are citizens (social inclusion); Ordinarity; Flexibility; Simplicity; Accountability; Diversity; Safeguards. Not a bad list to apply to lots of things!

There's a tool – *A Carers' Guide to interactions with Clinicians* which can be found on the Carers Australia website. Sounded worth checking out.

As carers we often live "behind the white picket fence, hiding our financial, emotional and physical problems." I'm still reflecting on this one. Some days I am proud of my achievement in hiding behind that fence – I feel normal and in control. Other days I wonder why



Carers are Radio Rockstars

By Fiona May *continued*

I hide and what might change if I stopped!

On the second day the focus shifted to caring and employment. This sounds dry but it was actually riveting stuff. I knew for instance that I have a more part-time, and more lowly paid job than I might otherwise have taken, but I didn't know that for women carers this is generally the case. I didn't know the very stark realities of the significantly reduced income that women carers face, nor the long term impacts on their financial security after retirement age. Likewise, my health isn't great but I hadn't made the link that women carers generally enjoy less personal health and wellbeing than non-caring women. The very fact that the presenter concluded



that on the whole women carers have a more "miserable" financial and health outlook says much!

After that sobering start we heard some quite inspiring stories about and from working carers. There are employers who are actively working to support carers, offering programs and supports to ensure that the carer can stay employed. Sadly for us, they are in the UK, but inspiring to know that with the right will, it is possible. It all made both economic and social sense.

"The economy cannot afford people not to work, or people not to care." With our aging population this is inevitable. *"Retaining carers in the workforce is the biggest*

sustainability issue that our society faces."

There was a list of key messages of the conference, I even wrote them down, but I'm sure Dee and the others are on top of that. It all adds up to the fact that much has been achieved for carers but there is still a long way to go. As one speaker said, our biggest threat is discouragement and that we stop expecting better. She noted that it is a long time since there has been such an appetite for working together – from governments at all levels, the caring sector and the disability sector. With that appetite comes opportunity. After my 2 days in Queensland, I am optimistic that there are many committed people working towards those opportunities and improving life for carers, and I am immensely grateful that they are!

People with disabilities getting on track with the PATH program

Over the past 12 months we have seen some remarkable outcomes from our PATH planning sessions. Many people with disabilities have a strong desire to be more independent and have the freedom that we all expect in adulthood. Although many adult pursuits may not be realistic for them, such as gaining their licence or living alone, it may be possible to identify other ways to grant them independence.

One PATH finder's dream was to get his driver's licence and own a car but his intellectual disability meant that this was not realistic. However, when the PATH team explored the reasons behind his desire to drive, it became clear that he wanted to be less dependent on his parents. After all, what 21 year old male wants to be collected early from a night out with his mates by his parents! So this PATH finder, with parents and friends, tackled this question of independence in a different way. Instead of having to wait up to collect their son after a night out, they now

had to wait to collect him from a return flight from Melbourne (that he had booked himself) after a five day stay with another friend (who also had a disability). No parents in sight ...

PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) is a proven planning tool developed for people of all ages with disabilities to actively plan and achieve their life goals and dreams.

The PATH finder (person having the PATH) invites friends, family, carers, etc, to join them in the process. Two PATH facilitators assist participants to find creative and realistic solutions. The 3 hour process is recorded on paper in colourful graphics. Ongoing support is provided by the PATH families network.

Want to know more?

Contact Louise Bannister (bcs_path@yahoo.com.au) or phone Sybilla Kovacs at Belconnen Community Service on 6264 0232.

Carers Australia's Federal Budget Submission

Summary of recommendations

In January 2009, Carers Australia made a Federal Budget Submission for 'Addressing the challenges for a sustainable health and community care sector.' Carers Australia made recommendations that were based on practical and cost effective proposals to support carers and address a number of the challenges ahead in maintaining a sustainable health and community care system.

Following is a summary of the recommendations made by Carers Australia in that submission.

Carer preparedness

- Information and resources
 - Update and consolidate all information packs and resources available to carers to ensure their relevance.
- Education and Training - Develop and deliver a national education and training course for carers and service providers to be funded over three years.

National Carer Framework

As a matter of priority, develop and implement a National Carer Act and a National Carer Strategy. Additionally we recommend that the Australian Government fund the development of a National Carer Action Plan with proposed timelines, activities and future funding allocations to meet the requirements of a National Carer Act and National Carer Strategy.

Financial security

- Increase the base rate of pensions and allowances be introduced as soon as possible
- Increase the in rental assistance, the utilities allowance and the pharmaceutical allowance be introduced as soon as possible

- Introduce payments to offset the additional costs of care, taking account of the precedents that currently exist within the welfare system
- Introduce a superannuation scheme, paid at the rate of 9 per cent of the Federal minimum wage for those people who have been out of the workforce for two years or more because of their caring responsibilities
- people on income support payments should be given the option of receiving their bonuses and other allowances as either part of their fortnightly payments or as a lump sum
- introduce a single concession card for people who receive income support and that entitles holders to similar concessions across Australia.

Special Disability Trusts

Implement the recommendations outlined in the Senate Committee Report – Building trust: Supporting families through Disability Trusts.

Employment participation

1. Fund a roundtable meeting with carers, government representatives, unions, employer groups, employment services providers and other relevant industry organisations to examine ways to best support and assist carers participate in paid employment.
2. Undertake a national education and awareness campaign targeting employers and employees of the benefits of employing carers.

Carers health and wellbeing

1. Increase funding for the National Carer Counselling Pro-

gram.

2. Develop and trial a carer identification field for primary health care provider software in consultation with carers and primary health care providers to assist in carer identification and support.
3. As a matter of priority, establish a 'National Carer Health Taskforce' to investigate options and advise government on carer health needs.

Young carers

1. Establish an ongoing 'Young Carer Scholarship Program' aimed at assisting young carers through secondary education, TAFE courses and university degrees. This would be an ongoing commitment for government.
2. Undertake a national school awareness and training program to ensure schools and teachers have the knowledge needed to understand and support young carers throughout their education.
3. Provide ongoing funding for a 'professional development, leadership program' to support young carers as ambassadors and mentors.
4. As a matter of priority, develop and implement a training program for Centrelink staff to ensure they have the skills, empathy and understanding needed to deliver a quality service to young carers and their families.
5. Undertake a national awareness raising campaign to promote self-identification by young carers and to increase awareness of young carers on the part of service providers, health professionals and educational institutions. Campaign

Carers Australia's Federal Budget Submission

Summary of recommendations continued.

material should be age, gender and culturally appropriate.

6. Increase funding for the Young Carers Respite and Information Services Program to \$24 million per year to enable more young carers to access support and information services.

Older carers

1. Develop information and resources specifically addressing the needs of older carers – to be available at all levels of the health system, community pharmacies, respite centres and through other appropriate organisations.
2. Develop education and training modules specifically targeting older carers needs.
3. Undertake a scoping study to ascertain what services are currently available for older carers with a view to developing best practice models of care.
4. An increased investment in supported accommodation.

Rural and remote carers

1. Make an investment in research over three years
2. Fund an awareness campaign for health professionals and service providers
3. Fund the development and dissemination of information and resources for carers.

Indigenous Carers

1. Research – an investment in research into Indigenous caring
2. Resources – updating resources which support and inform Indigenous carers and service providers
3. Programs – an investment in programs for Indigenous carers in regional and remote, and urban/metropolitan areas
4. Grants – development of a grants scheme providing funding for initiatives by individuals, community groups or organisations to assist Indigenous carers.

Research

We have addressed the need for specific research to be undertaken in our sections on rural and remote carers and Indigenous carers. An investment in research for these specific groups of carers will have long-term benefits for carers, thereby improving health outcomes for the people being cared for. This in turn will have economic benefits for Australia.

In addition to research on specific groups of carers, Carers Australia recommends the Australian Government fund a comprehensive research project on the relationship between patient outcomes and the levels of preparedness of the carer to provide ongoing care at home.

For full details of this Federal Budget Submission, please refer to the Carers Australia Website: www.carersaustralia.com.au

Healthy Caring Focus Groups

As a Carer, you are the expert in knowing what works for you and what doesn't. Yet, we know that many Carers often face challenges with their health and wellbeing. Lack of sleep, poor nutrition, stress and physical injuries can all cause significant problems over time.

Carers ACT is currently working with the University of Canberra to develop a kit to better support your health and wellbeing. Please join us at a focus group to explore the ways we can better help you. Two sessions will be conducted, one on a weekday and one on a Saturday morning (to better assist working Carers and Carers with other weekday commitments). There is no charge for this activity and morning tea will be provided.

WHERE: Carers ACT, Ground Floor Churches Centre, 54 Benjamin Way, Belconnen

WHEN: 10.00am to 12.00pm Tuesday 28th July 2009 or
10.00am to 12.00pm Saturday 1st August (please attend one session only)

An RSVP is required to assist with catering, please call Carers ACT on 6296 9900 to register.

Staff Profiles

Respite Centre



My name is Shirley Scott and I am the new Carer Advisory Services Coordinator. I initially joined Carers ACT in February as a Respite Coordinator with the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre located at our Torrens office. All the staff have been very welcoming, helpful and patient, especially with my broad Scottish accent.

I arrived in Canberra from Scotland 3 years ago with my husband and two daughters. We built a home in Jerrabomberra and have settled in well to this lovely 'garden estate'.

In Scotland I worked as a full time Carer Support Worker, seconded from the Social Work Department to the Princess Royal Trust Carers Centre for 4 years. My role was to provide practical and emotional support to unpaid carers, help them access existing services, start and maintain local support groups, outreaches, home visits, assist with welfare forms and identify and inform carers of possible

grants and practical funding opportunities.

I look forward to my new interesting and challenging role in assisting our Carers through the Carer Advisory Service and, also, to many happy and rewarding years with Carers ACT.

My name is Petra Ohnesorge. I have been working as Respite Coordinator in the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre in our Torrens office since May 2008. Since, my one year anniversary is imminent, I apologise for not having put few lines together for our news letter, a bit earlier.

My previous position was as a coordinator for one of Canberra's Service providers. My past experience is in Aged Care, working in Aged Care Residential facilities. I also have extensive experience as a support worker in both Aged Care and Disability.

I was born in Germany and came to Australia in 1992 with my husband and two daughters. We all like bushwalking, fishing and holidaying down the coast.

I am very happy working at here at Carers ACT. I have received a lot of support and have developed some good friendships. Assisting Carers to access respite and have a break is very rewarding.



Women's Return to Work Grants

Women on low incomes who have been out of the workforce due to caring for a child are continuing to be invited to apply for Women's Return to Work Grants. Grants are to assist women to pay for training/ education and resources that will help them get a job, and are up to \$1000 in value.

The ACT Women Returning to Work Grants Program is an ACT Government Initiative that assists women to achieve increased financial independence by helping them prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. The program is funded through the ACT Office for Women in the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. It is administered by the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

Application forms and eligibility requirements are available online at www.women.act.gov.au or by phoning Women's Information and Referral Centre on 6205 2885.

\$1 movie tickets for Carers at Hoyts

As part of membership to Carers ACT, Carers are entitled to \$1 movie tickets at Hoyts Cinema's. The conditions (from Hoyts) relating to this offer are:

- Maximum of 1 ticket per day
- The Carer must be accompanied by the person they are care for
- The Carer must present their Carers ACT membership card
- The offer is not valid for Special Events (such as 3D films)
- The offer is not valid for La Premiere, Directors Suite, or *thehalfpipe*.

The Australian Government has committed \$190 million until June 2012 to the **Helping Children with Autism initiative**. The package will help address the need for support and services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). If your child is under 6 years of age and has an official ASD diagnosis, you may be eligible for up to \$6000 in early intervention funding per financial year, with a maximum of \$12,000. The funding can be used to access early intervention services through an approved service provider. From the child's sixth birthday until they turn seven years of age special consideration may be given which would allow continued access to the funding. If you would like further information please contact the ACT Autism Advisory Service on 6140 1061 or email annettea@autismaspergeract.com.au or Kathybl@autismaspergeract.com.au

Speaking Up In The Act - A Workshop For People With Disabilities

Speaking up in the ACT is a self advocacy workshop designed to assist people who live with disabilities to learn how to effectively Speak Up for themselves when they access ACT Health services.

Participants will learn negotiation skills and have an opportunity to practise them in a supportive and understanding environment. Information on human rights and discrimination will be discussed.

9.30am – 1pm Friday 22 May 2009

Agean Room, Hellenic Club, Matilda Street, Woden

RSVP by 30 April 2009 to Dawn Nusa on 6244 3344 or email: dawn.nusa@act.gov.au

Carers ACT is the recognised and expert voice for carers, and a member of the National Network of Carers Associations. We are a non-profit association that relies on public and private sector support to fulfil its mission with and on behalf of Carers. We are governed by a volunteer board of directors with caring and professional skills who set the strategic direction of the organisation and oversee financial and legal governance.

Our Vision:

Caring is accepted as a shared community responsibility

Our Mission:

Leading change and action with and for Carers

Contact Us:

Belconnen Office:

Ground Floor, Churches Centre,
Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2617
Phone: 6296 9900 Fax: 6296 9999
E-mail: carers@carersact.asn.au
<http://www.carersact.asn.au>

Torrens Office:

1 Torrens Place, Torrens ACT 2607
<http://www.carersact.asn.au>

Commonwealth Carelink & Carer Respite Centre 1800 052 222*

Carer Advisory Service 1800 242 636*

* An Australian Government Initiative.

Free local call. Mobile phones will be charged at mobile phone rates.

Patron Mr R J Cahill, OAM,
Chief Magistrate

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of Carers ACT Inc. Articles in this newsletter may be reproduced with permission of the Editor (Colleen Donohoe).

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE:

Friday 10th July 2009. Please send articles and items to carers@carersact.asn.au.

Would you or someone you know like to become a member of Carers ACT?

Membership is **FREE** and benefits include: Delivery of our quarterly Newsletter to your home, special invitations to Carers ACT events, and a buy-one-get-one-free arrangement for Carers at Hoyts Cinemas. By being a member of Carers ACT you also enable us to represent a stronger Carers voice to Government and the community. To become a member, simply fill out and return the **MEMBERSHIP FORM** below to: Carers ACT, Ground Floor, Churches Centre, Benjamin Way, Belconnen ACT 2617

Title First name Surname
Address Postcode
Phone Mobile Email
Gender: Male Female Date of Birth Country of Birth
Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Yes No Are you a family Carer? Yes No

If you are a family Carer, please provide the details of the person you are caring for & answer other questions below:

Title First name Surname
Gender: Male Female Date of Birth Country of Birth
Condition of Care Recipient: Disability Chronic illness Frail aged Mental illness Other
Option: Specify Condition Is he/she Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? Yes No
How long have you been caring?
What is your relationship to your cared for person?

By signing this form you are agreeing to allow us to store your information in our confidential database, provide this information (without your name and address) to our funding bodies for statistical and planning purposes, and send you relevant information, including a copy our quarterly Newsletter (4 per year) and invitations to workshops and special member events. Signed: _____ Date: ___/___/___

DONATIONS GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED I wish to donate: \$10 \$20 \$50 Other _____

I have enclosed a cheque/money order for my donation payable to "Carers ACT" OR

Please charge to my credit card (min \$10): Bankcard Visa MasterCard Other _____

Card number: _____ Expiry: ___/___

Name on Credit Card: _____ Signed: _____ Date ___/___/___

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IF UNDELIVERED PLEASE RETURN TO:

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Benjamin Way, BELCONNEN ACT 2617

