

# Carers Representation Program E Bulletin: 28 July 2011

**Welcome to the fortnightly Carer Representation Program E-Bulletin**  
Informing you of Mental Health committee updates, news, events and more. This issue:

**GAI BRODTMANN ATTENDS MENTAL HEALTH CARERS LUNCH**

**FEDERAL NEWS**

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**WHAT'S ON IN THE ACT THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU**

**MENTAL HEALTH CARER REPRESENTATION PROGRAM**

## **Gai Brodtmann Attends Mental Health Carers Lunch**

Senator Gai Brodtmann met with 30 mental health Carers at a lunchtime event at Carers ACT on 21st July. Gai spoke about her role as a Federal Member of Parliament. She is Chair of the ALP National Policy Committee and highlighted the broad consultation that takes place to develop the Policy Platform. Carers Australia will be part of this process.

Gai talked briefly about the Federal Government's mental health package announced in the May Budget. Specific initiatives were mentioned to improve the mental wellbeing of young Australians, a greater emphasis on primary healthcare, a significant investment in data collection and more research into mental illness and the use of new medications. These initiatives are seen as the first step in a 10-year program. She advised mental health Carers to advocate for changes to the system through one unified message. She also stressed the importance of coming not only with problems, but also with ideas for solutions. Carers were then invited to raise issues and concerns.

### **A number of common themes emerged:**

1. The lack of ongoing employment opportunities for people with mental illness and the importance of employment in the recovery process.

Positive comments were made about Nexus whose mission is to assist people with a mental illness to gain employment. Information on this service can be found at: <http://nexushumanservices.com.au/about-nexus>.

2. The need for more supported accommodation options for people with a mental illness. Carers expressed concern about the shortage of available accommodation in the ACT. Supports for independent living are currently being provided by Carers. Both the Queanbeyan Home model and the Community Living Project model require further investigation and support.
3. Some Carers are funding the costs of ongoing medications and specialist fees. This requires ongoing employment or substantial superannuation on the part of the Carer.
4. Superannuation for Carers, especially those unable to work due to their Caring role was another theme. Research by Access Economics in 2010 showed the replacement value of informal Carers to Australia was \$40.9 billion, or \$613m per year in the ACT. Carers Australia has been campaigning for superannuation for Carers who are unable to work for more than 2 years. CA's last Budget Submission supported this.

5. More flexible working arrangements are required for employed Carers. Carers Australia has advocated strongly for policies that consider these.
6. Difficulties in determining Carers' eligibility for Centrelink benefits was another theme. Specific examples were given by Carers which highlighted their frustrations. Gai advised Carers to contact their local Federal Member if they are experiencing difficulties with the system.

#### **Carer Advocacy Service**

A number of individual Carer issues were raised at the lunch. Carers were reminded about the Carer Advocacy Service (CAS) which may help in resolving these. The CAS provides individual and/or family advocacy on a one-to-one basis to aid in resolving difficult or complex matters. CAS can help negotiate the complex bureaucratic service systems in concerns relating to your Caring role. CAS focuses on short term and long term goal-focussed issues. Any Carer living in the ACT is eligible to access CAS by phoning **1800 242 636**.

The next Mental Health Carer Issues Forum will be an evening meeting on the Southside in September. We are hoping to have Centrelink to speak . . . and to listen. Watch this space for more details!

## **Federal**

Federal news has settled down to a dull roar with the winter recess of Parliament. There are a couple of announcements about financial assistance:

### **Annual Supplement To Better Support Carers**

Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, Minister for FaHCSIA, announced on 1st July that recipients of Carer Allowance (about 530,000 people) will receive a \$600 supplement for each person they care for. Also, about 136,000 carers who receive Carer Allowance (child) will receive the annual \$1000 Child Disability Assistance Payment for each child they care for.

For more information, go to: [http://www.janmclucas.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2011/pages/annual\\_supplement\\_better\\_support\\_01072011.aspx](http://www.janmclucas.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2011/pages/annual_supplement_better_support_01072011.aspx)

### **Calls To Lifeline From Mobiles**

In a joint release with Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Mark Butler, Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, has announced that from 1st July calls to Lifeline from mobile phones from anywhere in Australia are free of charge. An agreement between the Australian Government and the three major mobile carriers has made this possible. Around one-third of the calls to Lifeline each year are made from mobile phones. That is about 150,000 calls, each lasting around 20 minutes, and can be significantly longer. This means potentially life-saving cost relieve to these people.

The full release is available at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr11-mb-mb064.htm>

### **Report On Early Intervention Programs Aimed At Preventing Youth Suicide**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing released its report on youth suicide on 4th July. This report emphasised the need for greater support of early intervention measures in order to reduce the rates of youth suicide. Committee Chair, Steve Georganas MP, said, regrettably, suicide still accounts for almost one quarter of all deaths among young men in Australia under the age of 25 years, and almost one in seven deaths among young women. However, evidence to the inquiry suggests that measures taken by successive governments have seen the rate of youth suicide decline since 1997. In undertaking this investigation, the Committee was keen to learn more about how reductions in the rate of youth suicide have been achieved, and to identify what else can be done to continue this downward trend.

This report is available at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/youthsuicide/report.htm>

### **New Homelessness Data Collection Successfully Introduced**

Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness Mark Arbib visited Neami, an organisation providing housing and support services to people with mental illness, to mark the successful introduction of new Specialist Homelessness Services data collection. Senator Arbib said Neami was one of 1500 homelessness services which would contribute data to provide more accurate information on homelessness around Australia. The

Commonwealth, in conjunction with the States and Territories, commissioned and funded the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to develop the new system and the number of services using it is expected to grow over time.

To read the full media release: <http://www.markarbib.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2011/Pages/>

### Funding For GP Mental Health Services

The AMA have launched an online petition as part of their campaign to convince the Federal Government to restore funding for GP mental health services through Medicare under the Better Access Program. The Government cut more than \$400 million from the Program in the May Budget. AMA President, Dr Steve Hambleton, said that, from November, Medicare patient rebates for GP mental health services will be cut by 50 per cent. The cuts will affect vulnerable patients and make access to vital GP services less affordable, Dr Hambleton said.

For anyone interested in this petition, it can be found at: <http://ama.com.au/node/6870>

## ACT



### Mental Health Week 2011 9 - 15 October

National Mental Health Week is an annual event celebrated in Australia and over 100 countries in an effort to increase the public's understanding of mental illness, encourage the reduction of stigma and discrimination against people living with mental illness, and promote positive mental health.

The ACT Health Directorate in collaboration with a number of community agencies will offer small grants/reimbursement program to assist community organisations with mental health promotion activities during Mental Health Week 2011. Mental health promotion encompasses a range of activities that maximise the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and the wider ACT community. Applications opened on Monday 12th July 2011 and

close on Friday 12 August.

Additional information about the Small grants Program can be found on our website at <http://www.carersact.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/here.pdf> or at [www.mhccact.org.au](http://www.mhccact.org.au)

### Action Framework To Lead Development Of Mental Health Community Sector

The ACT Chief Minister and Minister for Health, Katy Gallagher, has presented the Legislative Assembly with the Review of the ACT Community Sector of Mental Health Services; to grow and strengthen mental health services in the ACT.

This report is available to download at: <http://www.health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=sendfile&ft=p&fid=1309764055&sid>

### Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services

The MH,JH,A&DS Update reports that the Divisional meeting structure is now in place, and they are in the process of describing the professional and clinical governance systems. They hope to distribute a completed framework soon.

### What's On In The ACT That Might Interest You

#### Financial Information Evening

**What:** Information Evening on the tips and traps to superannuation, transitioning to retirement, investments and Centrelink services and entitlements.

**Where:** Pearce Community Centre Building 1, Meeting Room 22, Collett Place, PEARCE

**When:** Wednesday, 3 August 2011

**Time:** 6:00 till 7:30pm

**Cost:** Free

**RSVP:** Friday 29th July 2011 to Julie 6247 4111 or email [canberra@bridges.com.au](mailto:canberra@bridges.com.au)

#### Legal Matters Seminar

**What:** Information on Power of Attorney, Enduring Powers of Attorney, Wills, Trusts, Guardianship and the Public Trustee.

**Cost:** Free

**RSVP:** Jenny Thompson, 6207 3628 or [CarerSkills@cit.edu.au](mailto:CarerSkills@cit.edu.au)

**2 sessions available:**

**#1: Day Session**

**Where:** Koomarri Centre, Woden

**When:** Tuesday 9 August

**Time:** 10.00am-12pm

**#2: Evening Session**

**Where:** CIT Southside Campus, Ainsworth St, Woden

**When:** Tuesday 16 August

**Time:** 6-8pm

**Teenagers With Autism Spectrum Disorder**

**What:** Adolescents and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder - Transitioning to a meaningful life

**Where:** Southern Cross Club, Jamison, Cnr Catchpole & Bowman Sts, Macquarie, ACT 2614

**When:** Thursday 25 August 2011

**Time:** 9.00 am to 3.00 pm

**Cost:** \$90 Parent/Carer (\$80 early bird)

**RSVP:** Thursday 18 August (early bird closes Thursday 31 July) to Vicki Wood 6176 0514 [vicki@autismaspergeract.com.au](mailto:vicki@autismaspergeract.com.au)

For more information: <https://aaact.farsite.com.au/content/adolescents-young-people-asd-transitioning-meaningful-life-aaact-workshop>

**Advance Notice**

**Mindscales National Short Film Competition 2011**

**What:** "No Health without Mental Health"

There are three categories so everyone to share their ideas on the theme:

- a. Open - anyone is able to enter a film into this category.
- b. Consumer and Carers - Mental Health Consumers and their Carers can enter a film into this category if they choose.
- c. Student: High School, College or Tertiary Students can enter this category if they choose. It's your chance to show in 7 minutes or less, what you think about the theme.

**Where:** shortlisted films will be shown at the Mindscales Short Film Festival

**When:** 12th of October 2011

**Time:** Entries close on Friday the 2nd of September.

**RSVP:** Rachel Muller on 02 62497756 or [admin@mhccact.org.au](mailto:admin@mhccact.org.au)

**Mindscales Poetry Competition 2011**

**For more information contact:** Gavin Bussenschutt on 6245 6400 or [gavinb@mifellowship.org](mailto:gavinb@mifellowship.org)

**Mindscales Art & Photography Competition 2011**

**For more information contact:** Kate Wells on 6264 0232 or [kate.wells@bcsact.com](mailto:kate.wells@bcsact.com)

Information on Mindscales is available on the Mental Health Community Coalitions Website [www.mhccact.org.au](http://www.mhccact.org.au/cms/index.php?page=MHWeek_Mindscales) or direct [http://www.mhccact.org.au/cms/index.php?page=MHWeek\\_Mindscales](http://www.mhccact.org.au/cms/index.php?page=MHWeek_Mindscales)

**Mental Health Carer Representation Program**

**Reports**

No Carer representative feedback has been received, so we are unable to keep you informed about your representatives' committee and advisory/working groups at this point. A number of Carers have commented on the fact that they would like to be kept informed. We encourage Carer representatives to help us keep mental health Carers in the loop.

**Mental Health Carer Representative Forums**

Following on from the Rosenberg Review and, more importantly, following requests from a few Carer representatives, the first Mental Health Carer Representative Forum will take place on Wednesday 10th August at the Carers Hub in Holt from 10.30 – 11.30 am.

This is a meeting designed to allow Carer representatives to meet together, to provide an opportunity to know each other and to know more about committee, advisory and working group foci. The meeting will be chaired by a Carer. A draft agenda will be provided initially, and can be amended as required. To begin with, only Carer representatives are invited to this meeting, along with a Carers ACT staff member. However, as we become more used to the process (probably by early 2012), other Carers will be very welcome.

This forum can then provide a place to allow representatives to gather Carer views on particular issues. These Forums will alternate between business hours and early evening, and between the north and south side.

## Carer representative Positions Vacant

### Community

The Women's Centre for Health Matters (WCHM) have asked Carers ACT to seek a mental health Carer representative to be part of the Women and Mental Health Working Group (WMHWG). At the moment the group's activities are focused on:

- a. an evaluation of the group and ways forward,
- b. finalising the 'Women as Mental Health Carers' research project: findings and recommendations,
- c. results of 'older women with depression' research project,
- d. position papers for dissemination to Mental Health community sector, and
- e. discussing emerging issues

#### Key criteria:

- Female mental health Carer
- Term - until January 2014 - unless the group finishes earlier

As with other advisory & working group positions, if more than one nomination is received the nominations will be forwarded to the secretariat of the working groups to select the Carer representatives. The name of the successful candidate will then be sent to the Chair of the group who will confirm the appointment. Anyone may nominate for this position. However, nominations are especially sought from women mental health Carers.

If you are a representative currently sitting on an advisory or working group that is not due to finish before January 2012 then you are ineligible to be selected for this position. The Nomination form is attached to this e-bulletin. Nominations must be received by Carer ACT by COB on Monday 8th August 2011.

## Questions, Etc

A suggestion has been received that we add a section for questions and other bits and pieces that you want to know about. So . . . here it is. Let us know what questions you want to ask, or to say. We will put them here, and see what happens . . . Another Watch this Space!