

Carers Representation Program E Bulletin: 16 June 2011

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

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NEWS

Federal

There is a mixed bag of news this fortnight. The beginning of a National Mental Health Commission is exciting!

First Steps Towards National Mental Health Commission

The first steps are being taken towards establishment of the nation's first National Mental Health Commission, with the appointment of Robyn Kruk as its Chief Executive Officer. The Commission was one of the major recommendations of the Mental Health Expert Working Group and is built on extensive and continued consultations with the mental health sector and the community. The Commission's first task will be to produce a National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in 2012.

The minister for Mental Health and Ageing's full media release is at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr11-mb-mb050.htm>

Maybe, when it's up and running, articles like this one will become rarer . . .

Intellectual Disability Mental Illness Is An Unmet Need

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists is calling for better recognition, services and funding for people who have both an intellectual disability and mental illness. "People with both intellectual disabilities and a mental illness often fall through the services gaps between the health and disability systems and their considerable needs are not addressed," said Dr Maria Tomasic, President of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

People with intellectual disability have high rates of mental illness, but very poor access to mental health services. There are a number of challenges to improving access to high quality mental health care for people with intellectual disability. Limited verbal communication in people with more severe disabilities can make diagnosis of mental illness challenging.

This article, and ways to engage with this issue, are available at: <http://www.nswcid.org.au/standard-english/se-pages/health.html>

Some contradictory stories about mental illness and homelessness . . .

Research Sheds Light On Homelessness And Mental Illness

RMIT University researchers have challenged widely-held beliefs about the connections between homelessness and mental illness. The research paper by Dr Guy Johnson and Professor Chris Chamberlain will be published in the Australian Journal of Social Issues (Autumn, 2011). Dr Johnson and Professor Chamberlain used information from a study of homeless people in their research. They found only 15 per cent had mental health issues before becoming homeless, while 16 per cent of the sample developed mental health problems after becoming homeless. Dr Johnson said the findings challenged the community perception that mental illness was the primary cause of homelessness. The research indicates that providing housing to homeless people before treating their mental health issues is an effective approach.

The full article is available at: <http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=4c280qhmwwgo>

Funding For Mental Health Services To Help Address Homelessness

The Commonwealth Government is investing up to \$200 million to boost accommodation support for people around Australia who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as part of the \$2.2 billion mental health reform package. Visiting the Federation Hub House on the Gold Coast on 9th June the Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness, Mark Arbib, said the Government was committed to tackling homelessness through the National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health.

The Federation Hub helps people develop daily living skills, expand their social networks, encourage a

healthy lifestyle and provide an environment for people at the house to contribute to the community in significant and meaningful ways. The Government understands the strong link between mental health issues and homelessness and the important role facilities such as Federation Hub House play in supporting those with mental illness.

“The Government understands the strong link between mental health issues and homelessness and the important role facilities such as Federation Hub House play in supporting those with mental illness..”

Australian Bureau of Statistics research reveals that of the half a million Australians who reported ever being homeless, more than half of those experienced a mental health problem longer than 12 months.

And more fall out from the Federal budget last month

Budget Cuts Will Deny Effective Treatment To People With Serious Mental Health Disorders

People with serious mental health disorders will be left without appropriate mental health care under Budget cuts to the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative, according to new research released by the Australian Psychological Society (APS) on 7th June. This research shows that these cuts will overwhelmingly effect people with severe depression or anxiety disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder. The study demonstrates that 84% of these people had a moderate to severe, or severe, disorder at the commencement of treatment, with nearly half (43%) having additional complexities such as a second mental health disorder, personality disorder or drug and alcohol abuse.

To read the full article: http://www.psychology.org.au/news/media_releases/7june2011/

ACT

Community Policing Initiative Raises Mental Health Awareness

The Mental Health Community Policing Initiative was launched on 3rd June at the Winchester Police Centre by Roman Quaedvlieg, Chief Police Officer for the ACT and Katrina Bracher, Executive Director of Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services, Health Directorate.

As part of this initiative two mental health clinicians will be embedded within the Police Operations Centre, from Thursday through to Sunday as a dedicated resource available to police. These clinicians will work closely with both ACT Health and ACT Policing. They will be able to provide relevant information, and advise police on appropriate mental health interventions.

A four-day training program will be delivered on a monthly basis to ACT Policing, with lecturers drawn from Mental Health ACT, ACT Policing, the community sector and experts from interstate. This initiative promotes and upholds key principles of the Fourth National Mental Health Plan - safety, least restrictive care, dignity, access and coordination between agencies, and aligns with the National Standards for Mental Health and relevant legislation.

To access the full media release: <http://www.chiefminister.act.gov.au/media.php?v=10758>

Carers ACT

Vale Hediye, and introducing Lydia . . .

For those of you who haven't yet caught up with this news, the lovely Hediye has left to take up an exciting opportunity with the Australian Public Service. We wish her well in her new adventure, and we will miss her bright and bubbly personality. She might leave small shoes, but she leaves a big space to fill.

So, instead of having a partner in crime in this position,

I am here trying to work out how to make it mine! I'm Lydia, and I have been at Carers ACT for 2 years. I have previously been working as a counsellor and group facilitator, funded through Mental Health Outreach to be the Mental Health specialist on the Carer Support Services Team. I began the Mental Health Carers Support Group and have facilitated a number of Keeping Families Connected courses. I am looking forward to the challenges and joys of this position.

Prior to coming to Carers ACT I have worked as a counsellor and therapist for many years, also venturing into lecturing and tutoring in counselling courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and some group facilitation within the ACT community.

I am available at the usual phone number, 6296 9900, and by email at lydias@carersact.asn.au should you wish to contact me. I am happy to talk to you at any time that I am at work. I'm hoping that my answers will soon not contain so many "I'm not sure of that. May I check it and get back to you?" as they have recently. I look forward to working with you.

WHAT'S ON IN THE ACT THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU

Chronic Conditions Seminar Series

Where: SHOUT Meeting Room, Building One
The Pearce Centre, Collett Place, Pearce

When: Thursday 16 June 2011

Time: 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: Medicines

Speaker: Tony Lamb, Pharmacist

RSVP: Not required

Public Forum

What: Diversity Health Network ACT

Where: Companion House, 41 Templeton Street, Cook

When: Wednesday 22nd June 2011

Time: 3.30pm - 6pm

Topic: Target 2020: Setting the Agenda for Canberra's Diverse Community.

Envisioning the systems, services and supports that are needed to ensure the mental health and wellbeing of Canberra's culturally diverse community into the future.

Submit questions for the panel to ruth.kinlyside@act.gov.au

Refreshments provided

ADVANCE NOTICE

Help In Managing Long Term Conditions

Course: Help in Managing Long Term Conditions.

Where: Belconnen & Phillip

When: Beginning in July

Time: 6 week course. 2½ per week.

RSVP: Community Health Intake on 6207 9977

This is a FREE course designed to assist people of all ages living with conditions such as mental health issues or any condition lasting longer than 6 months. Carers and friends of people with chronic conditions are also encouraged to attend the course. Course topics include pain and fatigue management, cognitive symptom management, dealing with negative emotions, communicating with health providers, physical activity and nutrition, action planning and problem solving and peer support.

Poppy Facilitated Playgroup

What: Playgroup for Belconnen families where the parent has a mental illness.

Where: West Belconnen

When: To commence in third term 2011

Time: 8 Tuesdays during school terms

RSVP: Belconnen Child & Family Centre, 6205 2904

Poppy West Belconnen will be a supported playgroup which aims to assist parents to feel confident and capable of raising their own children, while reducing the impact of parental mental health problems on the infant's development. Poppy Playgroup is for parents affected by mental health problems who find it difficult to attend mainstream playgroups and who would benefit from a specialist program. These parents

will need to have community-based support for their mental health presentation.

Mindscapes National Short Film Competition 2011

What: "No Health without Mental Health"

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

1. **Open** - anyone is able to enter a film into this category.

2. **Consumer and Carers** - Mental Health Consumers and their Carers can enter a film into this category if they choose.

3. **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 Mindscapes 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

Carer Representative Positions Vacant

Advisory Committees, Advisory Groups, Working Groups

There are 6 vacant positions; one is for 3 months only, the others are for the duration of the advisory and working groups. 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. These names will then be sent to the Chairs of each group who will confirm the appointment. The new Nomination form is attached to this e-bulletin. Nominations must be received by Carers ACT by **27th June 2011**.

NB. The following positions available are for Working and Advisory Groups, which means they have a set lifetime.

Alternate delegate

3 month term on the HASI advisory committee from 1 July to 30 September 2011. The purpose of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative advisory committee is to develop and oversee the implementation of an operational model and to provide direction, support and feedback to the initiative.

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If you have any queries about these positions, please don't hesitate to contact Lydia on 6296 9900 or at lydias@carersact.asn.au

Community

Woden Community Services (WCS) would like to invite a mental health Carer Representative to be part of the Transition to Recovery (TRec) Advisory Group to advise on Carer concerns and approaches to inform the development of this new program. TRec is an initiative of the Woden Community Centre and will extend the services offered by the organisation to people living with a mental health issue and their families. This advisory group will start from mid June. Given this time frame, a Carers ACT staff member will attend the first meeting.

ACT Government

Some working groups are being reconvened to finalise the review the Mental Health Act. They will consider the three areas covered by the Act: mental illness, mental dysfunction (conditions such as brain injury and developmental delay) and forensic mental health. These working groups will run concurrently, so representatives will only be able to sit on one working group. They will meet three or four times over a period of three months from late June.

They will address the following issues:

- a. Decision making capacity,
- b. Children and Youth,
- c. Advanced Care Agreements,
- d. Involuntary physical care.