

# Carers Representation Program E Bulletin: 23 March 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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## **Quarterly Community Forum**

### **Mental Health Services Update for Young People**

The Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, Carers ACT and Mental Health ACT invite you to attend the Quarterly Community Forum with focus on mental health services update for young people. Speakers at the forum will include Lisa Kelly from Headspace ACT, Tatiana Beljic and Rod Tran from Catholic Care, Roger Weber from Bungee Program (Belconnen Community Service) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.

The forum will be held on Thursday March 24 from 5pm to 7.30pm. At the Youth Coalition Office, 46 Clianthus St, O'Connor, ACT 2602. *Please note the change of venue.* For further information or to RSVP your attendance please contact MHCC ACT on (02) 62497756 or email [admin@mhccact.org.au](mailto:admin@mhccact.org.au)

## **Productivity Commission draft disability care and support report**

The Productivity Commission released its draft report on February 28. Carers ACT, Koomarri,

the Mental Health Community Coalition, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, National Disability Services ACT, and People with Disabilities ACT will be working together to develop a collective response to the draft report. The response will be drafted for the group by Louise Gray. Disability ACT is participating in the process as an observer.

Carers ACT is holding a forum on Tuesday 29 March, at which the views of all Carers will be sought on the draft. The forum will be held at Carers ACT 2/80 Beaurepaire Crescent Holt between 12-2pm. Additional information on the forum can be found on the Carers ACT website at <http://www.carersact.asn.au/forum-seeking-views-on-the-productivity-commissions-draft-report-disability-care-and-support/> A copy of the draft report can be found at: [http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/106350/draft-disability-overview.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/106350/draft-disability-overview.pdf)

The Productivity Commission is seeking feedback on the inclusion of mental illness within a

National Disability Insurance Scheme. It has noted that there reform of the mental health system is planned and mental health is a priority area for the Federal Government in its second term. A specific section in the collaborative response will include comment on the eligibility issue.

Places at the Forum are limited, so if you wish to attend on Tuesday, it would be appreciated if you could contact Julia on 6296 9952 or at [juliap@carersact.asn.au](mailto:juliap@carersact.asn.au) If you are not able to attend, other options are available for providing feedback on the draft report. You may wish to provide your own submission to the Productivity Commission, or alternatively, you can email any comments through to Julia at Carers ACT or through the Mental Health Community Coalition Caucus.

### **Update on Sebastian Rosenberg's Review of the Mental Health Carer Representation Program and Mental Health Carers' Priorities**

We have received the final of Sebastian's report and will be posting the Executive Summary plus Recommendations on our website in the next day or so. We then plan to convene a meeting of mental health Carer representatives (of the Mental Health Committees, Working Groups and Advisory Groups) and interested mental health Carers to discuss the Recommendations.

### **Evaluation of Better Access Program**

The Better Access program provides Medicare rebates for mental health services. Its evaluation was commissioned by the Department of Health and Ageing in 2008 and was overseen by experts in the mental health and research fields. The evaluation has shown that there were 11.1 million mental health services provided over 2007-2009 to over 2 million people, but that young people, men and those living in rural and remote regions were not able to access mental health services at the same level as the broader population.

The evaluation began in January 2009 and was completed at the end of 2010. You can find a copy of the evaluation at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-ba>

### **Carer Pension Increase**

From March 20 age, disability and carer pensioners, and veterans' income support recipients will receive an extra \$13.20 a fortnight for singles on the maximum rate, and \$19.80 a fortnight for couples combined on the maximum rate. This March pension indexation increase is driven by wages growth in the six months to November 2010.

Following these increases, total pension payments for those on the maximum rate, including the base rate and pension supplement, will be \$729.30 a fortnight for singles, and \$1,099.40 a fortnight for couples combined. For full details of all rates and thresholds to be indexed on March 20 go to [www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/mediareleases/2011/Pages/rates\\_indexation\\_march\\_2011.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/mediareleases/2011/Pages/rates_indexation_march_2011.aspx)

### **Partners in depression A free group program for people supporting a person with depression**

Do you have a family member or friend experiencing depression? Would you like to learn more about depression and its treatments; strategies for managing your relationship with a person who has depression; and skills for improving your capacity to cope, manage stress and care for yourself? Hunter Institute of Mental Health has developed a support and education group program for partners and family members of a person with depression.

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This program 'Partners in Depression' aims to provide participants with an increased understanding of depression, and to teach them some skills for managing the impact of depression on their emotions, relationships and lifestyle.

**The session dates:**

**Where:** Phillip Health Centre

**When:** Wednesday March 23, 5pm-7pm - May 4 2011 (not including April 27)

**Program facilitators:** John Reinhard (Psychologist) and Hanneka Symonds (Provisional Psychologist)

You can register your interest in the program by phoning 6205 1488 and or by email to [hanneka.symonds@act.gov.au](mailto:hanneka.symonds@act.gov.au) or [John.reinhard@act.gov.au](mailto:John.reinhard@act.gov.au)

### Introducing Advance Agreements

'Paths of Healing' is a booklet which has been developed by the Advance Agreement Working Group. The Working Group was made up of representatives from the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, the ACT Mental Health Community Coalition, ACT Health, Mental health ACT, Public Advocate of the ACT, Marymead, individual consumers and Carers and community agency representatives. The booklet outlines the purpose of an Advance Agreement and the process for completing one. It also includes information of its limitations, storage and how to withdraw an Agreement. An Advance agreement gives the consumer an ability to let others know their wishes for treatment and needed support at a time when they are unable to speak up for themselves. To view a copy of the Advance Agreement please click here <http://www.carersact.asn.au/publications/> and click on the link 'Advance Agreement Consumer Guide'

### Member's report from Judy Bentley

Judy Bentley has provided a comprehensive and informative report for the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum. Judy and David Lovegrove are ACT representatives on that forum. Below are

a couple of highlights from her report, it covers the period September 2010 – March 2011.

A copy of Judy's full report can be found at <http://www.carersact.asn.au/publications/> and click on the link '[NMHCCF ACT Report Sept 2010 – March 2011 final](#)'

### Continuing Review of ACT Mental Health Treatment and Care Act.

**Relevant groups involved:** ACT Government, ACT Health and Mental Health ACT.

**Details:** Review is continuing with extensive consultations with consumers, carers, and all organisations with connections to mental health treatment and care. The process has been more prolonged because of the need to consider the requirements of the ACT's Human Rights Act. A new project team has been appointed to lead the review. The Senior Officer and administrative assistant begin on 7 March 2011.

**Outcome if any:** Ongoing.

### Mental Health Assessment Unit in Canberra Hospital Emergency Department

**Relevant groups involved:** MHAU, ED staff, Crisis Team staff, consumers and carers.

**Details:** The Assessment Unit has been located within the Emergency Department of Canberra Hospital and is providing specialised mental health assessment, crisis stabilisation and treatment for consumers who present to the ED. The 6-bed unit is staffed by Crisis Team members, and consumers are first triaged by ED staff to treat any possible physical issues before being welcomed to the MHAU. Carer needs have been provided with quiet lounge and interview areas. 1225 people have been assessed since opening in April 2010 to February 2011. 23% of people seen have been aged 18 to 25 and 67% have been adults between 18 and 64 years old.

**Outcome if any:** A safe and secure environment still within ED, but a separate, quiet, dedicated unit, with the aim of preventing admission to the secure unit.

### **Reduction of episodes of seclusion and restraint in the Psychiatric Services Unit of Canberra Hospital.**

Relevant groups involved: All Unit staff, including nursing, occupational therapy, wards-people, Public Advocate and consumers and carers.

**Details:** Since its participation in the Beacon demonstration site project, the PSU has been focusing on reduction and if possible, elimination of seclusion and restraint episodes. There has been a remarkable reduction in episodes, with periods of up to 12 weeks without seclusion. In the 4 months from October 1 2010 to January 31 2011 only two people were subject to seclusion and the total period of time for the four months was one and a half hours, in the four inpatient units reporting. Staff are given training in how to prevent and/or minimise aggression and there is a focus on culture change. A consumer led research project is underway to document the significance of the seclusion and restraint review meetings and consumer involvement in reducing levels of seclusion and restraint. Consumer representatives are included in weekly seclusion review meetings and all agree this is a positive move.

A 'Coping and Safety' Plan has been developed with consumers to highlight warning signs, with questions about when and why unsafe feelings arise, episodes of previous trauma, prison, suicidal thoughts, physical changes, etc.

"A 'Coping and Safety' Plan has been developed with consumers to highlight warning signs, with questions about when and why unsafe feelings arise.."

A consumer-led education and training program on recovery took place recently. Unit nursing staff are working with the OT to develop a sensory room, complemented by modulation material.

**Outcome if any:** Clear demonstrated evidence of reduction in seclusion and restraint episodes.

### **New Inquiry into Mental Health Barriers to Education, Training and Employment Participation**

The Federal Government has asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment to investigate how to assist Australians with mental ill health overcome barriers to their education, training and employment participation. The inquiry will also include investigations into improving access to education, training and employment services through greater collaboration between government and health, community, education, training and employment service providers and strategies to improve the capacity of individuals, families, community members, co-workers and employers to respond to the needs of people with mental ill health. Submissions to the inquiry close on Friday April 29 2011. For further information please contact the Secretariat on (02) 6277 4578, email [ee.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ee.reps@aph.gov.au) or visit the Committee's website at <http://www.aph.gov.au/ee>

### **Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit, Executive Reference Group**

We are pleased to announce that Jenny McGee as the successful nominee for the Adolescent and Young Adult Mental Health Inpatient Unit. Jenny was the sole nominee for the position.

### **Walk-in Centre**

Open 7 days a week from 7am until 11pm  
Canberra Hospital via the Yamba Drive Entrance

The Walk-in Centre helps people get fast, free, one-off treatment for minor injuries and illness. You can see a specialist nurse for advice, assessment and treatments for minor illnesses and injuries such as cuts and bruises, minor infections, strains, sprains, skin complaints and coughs and colds. You do not need an appointment to be seen. Go to [www.walkincentre.act.gov.au](http://www.walkincentre.act.gov.au) for more information.