

22 June 2012

National Mental Health Consumers raise their voice

The Mental Health Council of Australia today welcomed the Government's announcement that it will give people with lived experience of mental health a greater voice in mental health reform.

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) will assist in establishing a new National Mental Health Consumer Organisation, announced today by the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler.

This new peak body, funded by the Federal Government, will give mental health consumers a stronger voice in the reform process and bring together a diversity of mental health consumers and mental health consumer organisations to achieve a shared national vision leading to improved quality of life, social justice and inclusion.

The Federal Government has recommended that the new mental health consumer organisation will operate under an auspice arrangement to ensure it has the best possible foundation for long term success.

A mental health Consumer Reference Group (CRG) has been convened to work with and provide advice to the MHCA in setting the directions of the new organisation and setting up mechanisms to involve consumers from the beginning. The CRG will provide advice on:

- planning and implementation;
- initial roles of the new organisation to ensure it is representative of and accountable to consumers;
- potential program areas to ensure credibility and relevance;
- details of voting rights and complementary existing structures and how to address gaps;
- ensuring good organisational governance is embedded from the start;
- identifying appropriate strategies and policies to ensure high ethical standards, merit-based recruitment, strong consumer participation, communication and evaluation; and
- strategies to manage initial expectations, priorities and roles that can be realistically progressed as the organisation establishes.

CRG members were selected through a national expression of interest process and have a diverse range of experience, skills, knowledge and backgrounds. The members are listed below

CRG members

Mr Ian Watts (Chair)
Dr Michelle Banfield



Mr Michael Burge
Ms Fay Jackson
Mr Darren Jiggins
Mr Keith Mahar
Mr Lei Ning
Ms Lorraine Powell
Ms Emily Todorov
Ms Lily Wu

“The MHCA is excited to be undertaking this project and looks forward to working with the Consumer Reference Group to establish the independent mental health consumer organisation,” said Frank Quinlan, CEO of the MHCA

“Today’s announcement is a great credit to all those consumer advocates who have fought hard for years to give mental health consumers the voice they are entitled to. Once consumers have their own voice, their needs and aspirations cannot be easily ignored.”

“Mental health consumers will be involved from the beginning of the project and are invited to register their interest in receiving information and updates about the project via the project website: <http://mhconsumer.org.au>

“The Government is to be congratulated for establishing this very important peak body which will see much greater engagement with mental health consumers and lead to enhanced outcomes in mental health care,” Mr Quinlan said.

DoHA background on establishing the new national mental health consumer can be found at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-consume>

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