



ACT  
Mental Health  
Consumer Network

# NETWORK NEWS

See how the Network  
is working online on  
page 9

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## New PeerZone in Canberra

In early February, 11 mental health consumers were trained to facilitate [PeerZone workshops](#). We congratulate and welcome the following new PeerZone Facilitators: Jenny Adams, Chris Corcoran, Petra Kallay, Kath Laffey, Ben Martin, Bianca Rossetti, Ben Shipard, Jesse Townrow, Thi-Nha Tran, Terri Warner and Molly Wilkinson.

PeerZone Facilitators use their lived experience of mental distress or addiction to inform their work and change the world. PeerZone offers up to 20 workshops, which are facilitated by trained peers.

The first series entitled "Understanding ourselves" comprises three core workshops:

- Understanding Our Distress
- Understanding Our Alcohol and Drug Use
- Leading Our Recovery

The next series entitled "Empowering ourselves" offers a number of targeted workshops:

- Dealing with self-stigma
- Finding our voices
- Empowering ourselves in mental health services
- Empowering ourselves in alcohol and other drugs services
- Dealing with crisis

The Network will support the newly trained facilitators and work with them to offer PeerZone workshops across the ACT. We are hoping to offer the workshops through a variety of community organisations, beginning with Woden Community Service, who has already scheduled two workshops, followed by Meridian (previously AIDS Action Council), A Gender Agenda and headspace

The Network fulsomely thanks the following individuals and organisations for the supporting funding of PeerZone Training:

- Minister Shane Rattenbury;
- Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT; and
- MHJHADS Adult Community Mental Health Services.

# From the EO's Desk



Dear Readers

Welcome to the Autumn 2020 edition of the Network News.

It's been an unusual start to the year for everyone! Bushfires made life difficult for many and dangerous for some, and now coronavirus (COVID-19) is changing the way we live. Please

read The Network's response to COVID-19 carefully for information on what this means for you and for us.

Since the Annual General Meeting, we have had some changes in the Board. Lachlan Atyeo of Wellways joined the Board to fill one of our casual vacancies, and Ben Matthews, who was the Chair some years ago and is now working at the Mental Health Community Coalition, re-joined after a recent return from interstate. We are very pleased to have both Lachlan and Ben on board. Sadly, we also lost one Board member as John Brookes needed to resign to take care of his health. This leaves one Ordinary Member vacancy as well as the vacant Secretary position, but we have received some interest from some new members so I'm hopeful these positions will be filled very soon.

PeerZone was our big training event for the past few months. As you may recall from previous correspondence, last year the Network received a small one-off grant from the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing to have PeerZone training delivered. We were pleased to partner with some other organisations to support us to have not six but 11 consumers trained in a train-the-trainer style course that will enable these participants to deliver PeerZone modules for consumers in the ACT over the coming two years. A big thank you to Kathryn for all her hard work coordinating this event over the past several months, and congratulations to the ACT's 11 new PeerZone trainers!

We hit an unfortunate delay in the completion of the digital resource project, but it remains on track and it is in its final stages of cutting and coding. Two completed draft videos have been received back from the cinematographer, and the remaining pieces of coding for the others should be with her for drafting in the coming few weeks.

We have recently been managing some expected staffing changes. Purity Goj has confirmed she has earned a lengthy position at the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing, leaving the Policy and Participation Coordinator role formally vacant after the Board made the difficult decision to recruit at the coordinator level to bring our budget into line. This means that Kathryn sadly left us at Easter time as she was unable to accept the lower level position. Isobel Shearman who has been working with us for the past 10 months or so on the Consumer Representative Program (CRP), however has accepted an opportunity to work in the policy position to see if this is a good fit for her and the organisation. Jen Nixon has returned to the CRP Coordinator position recently. Jenny Adams and Val Phoenix have both returned after taking some time off, and a special thank you to Terri who has been assisting with the Peer Education Program, and will continue to do so whilst Jenny builds her capacity.

The Network purchased a beautiful 3,000 piece puzzle for our members to enjoy during Drop-In. Sadly with physical Drop-In closed until further notice, only a few consumers have had the opportunity to enjoy it. It will, however, be awaiting us all when we are able to reopen our doors.

Until next time, thank you for reading and for all the fantastic work our members do to improve the lot of consumers throughout the ACT.

- Dalane Drexler

# The Network's response to COVID-19

The ACT Government declared a Public Health Emergency (16 March) in response to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation across Australia.

The full media release can be found here [https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open\\_government/inform/act\\_government\\_media\\_releases/barr/2020/public-health-emergency-declared-for-act](https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/barr/2020/public-health-emergency-declared-for-act)

Following this, and current at the time of print, the Federal Government has introduced several stages of preventative measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, for instance, closing places where people usually gather (e.g. pubs, gyms, cinemas, restaurants, cafes, places of worship). These measures may change, pending how the pandemic unfolds further here in Australia. The full media release can be found here <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/update-coronavirus-measures-220320>

In response to the developing public health challenge, the Network has made some important decisions:

- **Face-to-face events are cancelled, including but not limited to Drop-In, the April Consumer Representative Forum and the Hearing Voices group;**
- **Consumer Representatives are encouraged to NOT attend any scheduled meetings; and**
- **Appointments to committees have ceased temporarily.**

The Network is still being asked for consumer input on policies. so please regularly check your email for invitations to comment. If you are interested in commenting on policy but do not use email regularly, please contact Isobel on 0424 468 620 or email [policy@actmhc.org.au](mailto:policy@actmhc.org.au) to let us

know, so we can send you any documents.

During these difficult times, the best things you can do as an individual are to

- **Ensure good hygiene (see the Good Hygiene for COVID-19 (page 9)**
- **Be mindful of the physical distancing measures (keeping at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others);**
- **avoid non-essential travel; and**
- **Stay socially connected through electronic means**

The Network is aware that social isolation can contribute to poor mental health. Therefore, we are still operating and are making changes so we can keep in contact with our members.

Staff began working remotely from Monday 6 April.

Consumers are still able to contact the Network Monday-Friday 9am-3pm on the following numbers if the main office number (02 6230 5796) is unanswered:

0449 127 940 (for general calls)

0449 127 941 (for consumer representation)

0424 468 620 (for policy matters)

0408 069 423 (for education)

Videoconferencing is now possible for members who have access to a smart phone, tablet or computer and adequate internet access. We will be emailing out information about how to do this. If you have a device but do not have an email address, and would like help to create one, please call 0449 127 940 for assistance.

We are also working on longer term plans to keep connected with you. See page 9 for details about our online Drop-In service.

# Chair's Report

Hello all, and welcome to 2020. The phrase that I heard from Lived Experience Australia '*physical distancing with social connection*' is vital at this time. We need to spread this phrase so the media uses this rather than 'social distancing' which has negative consequences. Each day the world is facing new challenges, the likes of which most of us have not experienced. You need to work together to activate your strengths to give you energy through this time, find the balance in life, let go of draining habits and become resilient to encourage strengths in those around you.



I am struggling with the concept of isolation and uncertainty of the current situation. I am overwhelmed with information, I need time when I don't hear or read about the pandemic! Saying this, good has also come from this. I don't need to rush out of the house to drop kids at school (I am not a morning person) and get to meetings. The day starts off more relaxed, making the rest of the day less stressful. I have also found the ACT Recovery College a great support in having coffee and chats, continuing with classes and communication on Facebook to be a useful connection in time of isolation.

I believe that going forward we as the peak consumer organisation in the ACT need to focus on ways to socially connect people in different ways, not just using technology but ensuring that people in the community are connecting. Technology can hold many challenges for consumers and we need to look at different ways to connect.

I also believe we need to stay optimistic, but it is difficult. We are living with study, health, education and employment changes happening with little choice. How can we as a network offer choice back into these areas? As consumers we all want to advocate for choice but I feel that this is limited during this time. The Network needs to create the right environment for changes and choices through supporting people to look at the situations in different ways and from different point of views. It is like changing negative thoughts to positive thoughts, it is not easy but the Network and other organisations can provide ways in doing this, we need to encourage each other to seek support.

As Chair I would like to highlight the importance once again of collaboration between services in the ACT and

nationally. The Network has developed and created a strong relationship with ACT Health to ensure that consumer voices are being heard and the Network aims to increase representation in other government departments that will impact community mental health. Consumers need to be aware that mental health is not just a health issue but impacts other government departments, and getting systemic consumer representation in multi department is important for change.

Positive systemic changes I have noted through this time is the movement from mental health awareness to addressing stigma and accessing supports when required. The national Mental Health Commission and research organisations are now focusing on anti- stigma and creating safe mental health wellbeing in the community. The increase importance of a peer workforce is also being raised and guidelines and polices are being implemented in many organisations. The ANU released a tool for mental health after bushfires based on community feedback, ASK for help ([https://rsph.anu.edu.au/files/2020\\_Bushfire\\_Mental\\_Health\\_ANU.pdf](https://rsph.anu.edu.au/files/2020_Bushfire_Mental_Health_ANU.pdf)). This is also included on page 10. I feel that the Network has worked closely and supported people in the community effected by the bushfires through listening and acting on the concerns.

I would like to thank the Network for the opportunity to become a trained co-facilitator of the PeerZone workshops. It will be great to establish PeerZone training for consumers and I look forward to doing this. Thank you to the other consumers for being involved in the training; I am keen to continue to network with the other organisations to follow up on setting up workshops in the community.

Please engage and notify the Network of activities that could support consumer engagement and systemic advocacy so that the network can plan for the year ahead. I look forward to developing the Strategic Plan in collaboration with consumers, so please email me your concerns or issues that you would like the Network to work on in the following years at [chair@actmhcn.org.au](mailto:chair@actmhcn.org.au) .

Remember to keep physical distancing with social connecting!

All the best

Bianca Rossetti  
Chair ACTMHCN

# Rufus Scholarship

The Network reported on this new Scholarship available to mental health consumers in our Summer 2019 newsletter.

A number of applications were received in the inaugural round, and we congratulate Jenny Hodgson as the first recipient of the Rufus Scholarship.

The Rufus Scholarship was established in December 2019 by a private donor, facilitated by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc. This Scholarship will provide an annual grant of up to \$600 to support a mental health consumer to further or continue their education whom would not otherwise have the financial means to do.

This scholarship can be used to cover direct education costs and other associated costs (such as textbooks, equipment, transport and so on), and is for residents attending an educational institution, or equivalent in the ACT.

Individuals may self-nominate or be nominated by another person or an agency/organisation. The individual must be aware of and agree to their nomination prior to submission.

Applications for the Rufus Scholarship in 2020 will be open in the months leading up to Mental Health Month in October and a reminder will be included in the Spring 2020 edition of Network News.

# Accreditation

Back in November 2019, the Network underwent an accreditation review process which is a requirement under our funding contract with the ACT Government. This Accreditation occurs every three years, and its purpose is ensure that our policies, practices and organisational system are at a standard required for a peak body through reviews and recommendations for areas of improvement.

The Network received the outcome of this process in mid-March, and we are pleased to report that we continue to meet the standards.

Our next Accreditation review will occur in 2022.



Australian Service  
Excellence Standards

**ACT Mental Health  
Consumer Network Inc**

achieved  
**Accreditation**  
*Certificate Level*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Curnow".

Fiona Curnow  
Director  
Community Services  
Department of Human Services

*Period of Accreditation*

*5 November 2019 – 5 November 2022*



# Network Update

## Community Education Program

Currently the Community Education Program consists of the following workshops:

- Self-Advocacy
- Consumer Representation
- Understanding the NDIS for Peer Workers
- Peer Co-facilitation Skills
- Peer Mentoring
- My Rights, My Decisions—Peer Education

We are always open to ideas for new workshops on topics that are of interest and benefit to our members, so please let us know if you have an idea!

### Projects we have been working on

Currently the Community Education Program is developing a set of training videos that will be used as part of our workshops. This is an exciting project, which has required many hours of work, and lots of input from our members and staff.

Once the interviews with our members and other stakeholders were finished, the next stage was to go through the footage and decide what would go where. Although we completed a similar project a few years ago, we quickly realised that this stage takes even MORE time than we remembered! Thanks to members and staff who participated and gave their feedback on the video outlines – this has been a true co-design process!

The videos will be used in the training and promotion of the following workshops:

- My Rights, My Decisions
- Understanding the NDIS for Peer Workers
- Peer Co-facilitation Skills
- Peer Mentoring

We hope to be able to share them soon with our members! In addition to the video project, the first half of the year will also entail updating and developing new training to meet the needs of our members and Consumer Representatives.

### Upcoming Training Events

The training schedule for 2020 is currently under development, with the following courses scheduled for mid 2020:

- Peer Mentoring
- Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation

If you are interested in participating in any of these, please contact us!

## Peer Education

Our Peer Educators, Terri and Jenny, are busy getting the My Rights, My Decisions program running for 2020. Jenny is working on resolving issues raised by consumers and clinical staff in the workshops last year, and Terri is delivering staff training to the community mental health teams, consumer workshops to Recovery College students, and organising consumer and carer sessions at the Network office and in other locations around town. Currently workshops are on hold until further notice.

The Network strongly encourages consumers to put a My Rights, My Decisions form kit in place if it is possible that you may experience reduced decision-making capacity and be hospitalised in the future. The form kit allows you to express your views while you have decision-making capacity, and this can then be taken into account by your treating team if you are later hospitalised with reduced decision-making capacity. It's a good idea to have some support while completing the form kit, and one of the ways you can be supported is by attending a My Rights, My Decisions workshop where you can get more information on what your rights are, how to complete your form kit, and who can help you if your wishes are not followed. You will also receive a keyring and a fold out card that you can carry with you containing phone numbers of those you would like to be contacted if you are hospitalised, as well as other important information you would like those treating you to know.

The workshop consists of two 3-hour sessions. The first session covers consumer rights under the *Mental Health Act 2015 (ACT)*, and concepts such as decision-making capacity and supported decision-making. It also includes guest speakers from ADACAS, the ACT Human Rights Commission, and Legal Aid ACT when available. The second session covers detailed information about the My Rights, My Decisions form kit, including Nominated Person, Advance Agreement and Advance Consent Direction, allowing you to develop a draft ready for discussion and signoff by your treating mental health practitioner.

The next My Rights, My Decisions training for consumers was scheduled for late April 2020 which needed to be postponed due to current circumstances. We are working on how to offer this training via online methods. If you would like to register, please email [peer.education@actmhc.org.au](mailto:peer.education@actmhc.org.au) or call 6230 5796.

# Consumer Rep Program

The Network thanks all Consumer Representatives who attended the first Consumer Representative Forum this year and a special thank you goes to Patricia Green for chairing the meeting.

In light of the current COVID-19 pandemic many consumer representation activities have ceased until further notice.

- The April Consumer Representative Forum was held via Zoom;
- Appointments to committees were placed on hold; and
- Consumer Representatives were advised not to attend face-to-face meetings.

## Consumer Representative Meeting Attendance

Face-to-face committee attendance does not fit within the definition of 'essential services' currently in place. For this reason, face-to-face meetings are now suspended by the Network until further notice. Consumer Representatives may attend meetings via Zoom and teleconference etc, where this offered. Should any Consumer Representative elect to attend meetings in person this will be so at their own risk and the Network will not be able to offer insurance should they contract the illness in the course of these duties.

If you are attending meetings via zoom or other teleconferencing methods, please ensure that your attendance signature is discussed with each Secretariat, and keep the CRP Coordinator informed to assist you with any reimbursement issues should they arise.

Please continue to keep in touch with the CRP Coordinator, Jen Nixon, to provide updates or discuss any concerns.

## Feedback

Would all Consumer Representatives please provide feedback on any meetings they have attended in February and March. The information can be provided by emailing a summary to [representation@actmhcn.org.au](mailto:representation@actmhcn.org.au).

## Acknowledgements, new and outgoing Consumer Representatives

The Network welcomes Maree Pavludis and Julia Bocking into their new Consumer Representatives roles, and extends great thanks to our outgoing Consumer Representative, Chris van Reyk, who resigned from Consumer Representation in January this year. We wish you every success Chris in all your future endeavours.

## Appointments

The following Consumer Representative roles have been appointed since the Summer edition of our Newsletter:

### Occupational Violence Prevention and Management Committee (OVPMC)

Paul Thompson

### The Way Back Support Service Governance Committee

Rose Beard

### Extended Care Unit (ECU) Refurbishment of Brian Hennessy Rehabilitation Centre Project Control Group (PCG)

Maree Pavludis

### Southside Community Services Step Up Step Down Project Control Group (SCSSUSD PCG)

Deahne McIntyre

### ACT Recovery College's Co-Design Committee

Julia Bocking.

## Policy Program

The **Consumer Feedback Management Policy and Procedure** (submitted 28 February) was particularly interesting because the Policy and Procedure were both well structured and written. Unfortunately, feedback from Network members indicated that the experience of consumers providing feedback to Canberra Health Services (CHS) does not reflect the Policy or the Procedure. We then used two consumer case studies to illustrate.

The Network commented on CHS's **Consent and Treatment** (submitted 11 March) based on a consultation held with members. Those present felt that the document expressed a nursing or medical view of the world, and more thought had to be given to the people being asked to consent to treatment. In particular, the policy needed to incorporate the concept of recovery, and emphasise the importance of meaningful communication with consumers. They also felt that the policy should promote My Rights My Decisions Form Kit and encourage health professionals to undertake My Rights My Decisions training.

The Network has made some progress toward consumers having a greater voice in the development, implementation and evaluation of **Supported Accommodation**. One house has opened in Florey and three others are due to open later this year. We had hoped to host a consultation with consumers on the internal features of the houses in the very near future. Unfortunately, the measures to reduce COVID-19 infection rates mean that this may not take place.

# Drop-In notice

As advised on page 3, the Network, in response to the ACT Governments declaration of a Public Health Emergency in regards to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, have been required to cease holding events for our members and the community to attend. This includes our weekly Drop-In openings. At the time of print, the current cessation of Drop-In is up to and including the 23 April 2020 where, following new advice and guidelines, this situation will be reviewed. There were some activities planned to be held during Drop-In prior to this emergency being declared. Below are details of what was scheduled and we hope to continue holding when we are able to do so.

## Master your emotions for better mental health

This free workshop would have been ideal under the current circumstances. To members who expressed interest in participating, a notification was sent out on Tuesday 17 March reminding you that this workshop had been cancelled and that the Network will notify members when the workshop will be able to be held again.



For people to act upon the advice being given to exercise and eat well for improved mental health and management of stress, anxiety and depression, they need to be able to learn how to feel and cope with the emotional triggers behind unhealthy/unresourceful behaviours and habits.

For other members and readers, if you would like to register your interest, please send an email to [actmchn@actmchn.org.au](mailto:actmchn@actmchn.org.au), call 02 6230 5796 or SMS to 0424 468 620.

As we mentioned in our Summer newsletter, the Network purchased an amazing 3000 piece jigsaw puzzle as a general Drop-In activity. We commenced piecing this puzzle together at the end of February. At the time of print this is where we got up to.



As forewarned, the outside edge has now been completed.

When face-to-face Drop-In can recommence, everyone is welcome to come in during Drop-Ins to continue working on this when there are no scheduled events, until completion.



As we are all strongly encouraged to remain at home and avoid non-essential travel to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is becoming more and more apparent that the longer we are required to maintain this way of living, the harder this is impacting on people's mental health.

As the Network has been required to move to an online and remote method of working, we will be commencing our weekly Drop-In for consumers via Zoom. This will be an opportunity for consumers to seek at least some connection with other people and get a bit of peer support. During this time we can talk about how things are, what marvellous creations you've come up with during this isolating period—even to what you've been binge watching on Netflix!

We are aware that some people have security concerns using Zoom, but please be assured that the Zoom developers have made significant security enhancements over the past few weeks.

The Network will also be using Zoom and other online meeting tools to continue holding internal meetings and policy consultations.

# Online Drop-In

**The online Drop-In will operate from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Thursdays, commencing Thursday 30 April 2020.**

Network staff members will open the Drop-In and anyone who wants to join can enter the session at any time while the session is open.

There are two ways to join in the online Drop-In: via internet or calling in. The details are just to the left on this page. As an added security level introduced by Zoom, a password is required to join.

To join the Online Drop-In, click on, or type/copy and paste into your browser, the following link and enter the required password  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84043322259?pwd=SmhLZUN6cnUxdnJpcjB3SGh2K1lWZz09>

Meeting ID: 840 4332 2259  
Password: 357520

## To join by phone

One tap mobile  
+61370182005,,84043322259#,,#357520#  
Australia  
+61731853730,,84043322259#,,#357520#  
Australia

Dial by your location  
+61 2 8015 6011 Australia



*A sample screenshot of a Zoom meeting that shows both video and a telephone call in.*

## Joining via internet

Zoom is available for computers and mobile devices.

If you haven't used Zoom before, when clicking on the link, you will be prompted to download and install Zoom. From there, you can enter your name, the session password and join in. Zoom has some functions like virtual backgrounds (like Petra does in the image), so you can join in from anywhere without breaking any physical distancing and isolation rules.

It should be noted that the quality of the video is dependent on the quality of the internet service you use.

## Joining via telephone

If you don't have internet access, you can still join by calling in to the session and again entering your name and password. While you won't be able to see other participants, you can still talk and hear others. Please note standard call charges may apply.

# Mental Health in a crisis

Already in 2020 Australians have been, and currently are being, affected by two major events: bushfires and the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic - both of which continue to have major impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing. Managing your mental health both during and after a crisis can be difficult, but attempting to do so in a healthy manner can help prevent you from developing more serious mental, physical and social problems.

While the bushfire crisis has now passed, many people may still feel the after-effects on their mental health to varying degrees. Below is a guide produced by the ANU to assist in managing mental health after a bushfire crisis.

While this resource was produced in response to the devastating bushfire season, some of the points can also be applied to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

**TAKE CARE OF YOUR AND OTHER'S MENTAL HEALTH AFTER BUSHFIRES**

**A**CKNOWLEDGE YOUR STRESS  
It is NORMAL and common to be stressed when there are bushfires. For most, this will fade with time.

**S**OME THINGS YOU CAN DO  
1 Be patient with yourself  
2 Spend time with others  
3 Focus on your strengths  
4 Take time out if you're angry  
5 Remember what's important  
6 Manage self-critical thoughts

**K**NOW WHEN TO GET HELP  
Are you feeling overwhelmed?  
Are your loved ones concerned about you?  
Are you finding it hard to make decisions?  
Are you unable to do your usual activities?  
Help is available. Talk to your GP, or contact Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

College of Health & Medicine  
**ASK FOR HELP**  
<https://rshp.anu.edu.au/ask>

Australian National University

Please remember at all times, that Lifeline can be contacted on 13 11 44.

BeyondBlue also offer counselling support via webchat ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)) and telephone 1300 224 636 .

## COVID-19

Since the emergence of this virus, there has understandably been a growing concern and anxiety among people around the world, and life as we know it has had to change quickly and dramatically—both socially and employment wise.

While it will take some time for this crisis to pass, it is important to be aware of what COVID-19 is, what the symptoms are, how to prevent acquiring a COVID-19 infection, and what sources of information and supports are available.

### What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory infections. These can range from the common cold to more serious disease. One you may remember is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which emerged in 2002-2003.

COVID-19 is the disease, caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, and was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China.

### What are the symptoms?



Other symptoms that have been experienced include head and other body aches. It should be noted that many of these symptoms are very similar to cold and flu viruses. Currently what separates experiencing these symptoms are factors such as recent overseas travel or being a close contact of a person who has recent been overseas or who has a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis.

You can check your symptoms via the Health Direct symptom Checker ([www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker))

## Prevention

Your hands are the most common method for the virus to enter your body, with inadvertent inhaling being second (being close to someone who is coughing or sneezing). The COVID-19 coronavirus is able to survive on some surfaces for up to 72 hours. Regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces (taps, handles, bench tops etc.), particularly in shared residences, will help reduce the risk of coming into contact with the virus. Frequent hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds is the best prevention technique.

While physical distancing measures implemented by the Government may seem harsh, they are practical. Viruses like COVID-19 are likely to die out if they cannot spread to other people. Other common preventative measures are:



- Practise good Cough and sneeze etiquette/hygiene



- Maintaining the appropriate physical distancing measures

- Avoid contact with other people if unwell and **GET TESTED**



Further guidelines available from [www.australia.gov.au/](http://www.australia.gov.au/)

## Finding Information

The ACT Health Directorate recently launched a website specific to COVID-19 in the ACT. This website includes Public Health Alerts, prevention guidelines, information on supports and resources etc. as well as information on the current testing criteria. The website can be accessed at the following link

<https://www.covid19.act.gov.au>

The Commonwealth Department of Health website is updated daily with the latest medical advice and official reports:

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>

The Federal Government recently launched an official 'Coronavirus Australia' app for iOS and Android devices where you can access the latest information, news, preventative guidelines etc. The app can be accessed via <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/coronavirus-australia-app>

You can also sign up to the Governments' WhatsApp channel <http://aus.gov.au/whatsapp>

Further information can be found on the Australian Government website [www.australia.gov.au/](http://www.australia.gov.au/)

**Information about COVID-19 is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the national Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.**

## Getting Support

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect Australians in numerous ways, the Federal Government has introduced multiple support packages. On the [Australian Government website](http://www.australia.gov.au) (www.australia.gov.au), information about the types of supports available can be accessed.

In response to the growing mental health concerns, BeyondBlue received Government funding to develop a dedicated national mental health support service related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Coronavirus Mental Health Support Service is now online and offers free information, counselling, community forums and referrals online and by phone. It also provides information on topics ranging from coping and wellbeing advice, to digital self-help tools and advice for people, small business owners etc. who have been impacted by COVID-19.

This service can be accessed online at [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](http://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au) or by calling 1800 512 348.

Other national mental health services that can also be accessed include the websites of [Head to Health](https://headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support/covid-19) (https://headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support/covid-19) and [Life in Mind](https://lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/support-for-those-impacted-by-adverse-events/mental-health-support-for-covid-19) (https://lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/support-for-those-impacted-by-adverse-events/mental-health-support-for-covid-19).

Locally, Woden Community Service (WCS) are still operating their mental health programs via telephone and online methods, and are still accepting referrals.

Information about each program can be found via the WCS website ([www.wcs.org.au/services/mental-health](http://www.wcs.org.au/services/mental-health)). Below are the contact details for each program.

### Transition to Recovery (TRec)

Contact: Jayne Tandi on 0409 706 827 or 6221 9511

### The Way Back Support Service

Contact: Prue Gleeson 0437 112 483 or 1800 929 222

### Early Intervention Programs

**New Path:** An early intervention service, to assist people to tackle severe mental health challenges with associated functional impairment, targeting 18-35 years and up to 64 years. For an electronic referral form, see: <https://www.wcs.org.au/services/mental-health/new-path>

Contact: Sophie Mayer: 0409 038 194

**Next Step:** A free and confidential psychological support service provided to people experiencing depression, anxiety, having difficulty adjusting to changes in life circumstances or experiencing grief and loss. Next Step is delivered by coaches who have been trained to deliver this model of psychological therapy. This model is particularly suited to people adjusting to the isolation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. GP and self-referrals is encouraged.

Contact: 6287 8066 (business hours)

Growing up I had a loving family, and extended family and friends. However, not all was positive. The early 50's and 60's were very tough indeed if your family was poor.

Moreover, I was subject to sexual abuse and massive betrayals of trust. I also cared for a family member with mental illness and needed to use that same skill set to help care for one of my own children. Consequently, I self-medicated with numerous substances that didn't necessarily help me long term. I now know I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety, I cannot handle stress well, and I get depressed in Canberra's long, cold winters.

Some of the people, organisations and approaches that have helped me along the way:

Ron Coleman, who wrote *Recovery: An alien concept*, also co-established Working to Recovery which has developed experiential courses that enable the delivery of training that is life changing for participants and organisations.

GROW is a community-based organisation that has helped tens of thousands of Australians recover from mental illness through a unique program of mutual support and personal development.

Brahma Kumaris is a worldwide organisation dedicated to personal transformation and world renewal through the power of meditation.

The NDIS started 2013, but it wasn't until my third NDIS plan that I was well enough to look outside where I was and to start planning for better outcomes. I choose to self-manage, which means I am "the master of my own health team" and can afford to seek help from the professionals I choose. My health team includes a specialist chiropractor, physiotherapist, exercise physiologist, a naturopath and a Shiatzu masseur. As a result my leg muscles are strengthening, my diet has improved, I have the capacity to get my property ready for sale, my diabetes is well controlled, and most importantly, I was able to see my Dad again.

My improved health means that I now work on two disability boards and ACTCOSS, and hold down a senior Vice President position in an ALP sub-branch. For my winter holiday respite, I am going to my Quakers Yearly Meeting in July near Newcastle. Thanks to the NDIS I have greater capacity to serve and improve the community of Canberra in which I grew up!

- Peter Dwyer

# ACT Wellbeing Framework

The ACT Government is making Canberra an even more liveable city where our entire community can thrive. We've established the ACT Wellbeing Framework that captures what's most important to you, so the ACT Government can focus on what you care about in their future decision making.

Definitions of wellbeing are typically broad and diverse, encompassing a wide range of areas that impact on an individual's quality of life. Generally, having the opportunity and ability to lead lives of personal and community value – with qualities such as good health, time to enjoy the things in life that matter, in an environment that promotes personal growth – are at the heart of wellbeing.

When talking about individual wellbeing, we often speak to a person's physical and mental health, the strength of connections they share with people around them, or their financial position. More expansive indicators of wellbeing can be a person's relationship to their surroundings, such as their safety, their capacity to enjoy and live in harmony with the natural and built environment, or their ability to be mobile in their community. These aspects of wellbeing are not independent of each other. They operate together and influence one another, creating complex relationships that are in turn shaped by an individual's lived experience.

Further information about the Framework can be found via the ACT Wellbeing Framework website ([www.act.gov.au/wellbeing/home](http://www.act.gov.au/wellbeing/home))



# Changes to WWVP Renewals

There have been some important changes recently made to the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011* (the Act) which have been made in response to the COVID-19 health emergency. These changes apply to applicants who have previously been risk-assessed and determined not to pose an unacceptable risk of harm to vulnerable people.

Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registrations held by workers expiring on, or after, 16 March 2020 will be automatically extended for a period of up to six months after the cessation of the declared health emergency. If the expiry date is on, or after, 16 March 2020 the person is considered to be registered, regardless of the date on the card. A confirmation notice will also be provided to registration holders advising them of this extension.

The intention of this change is to remove barriers to workers from re-engaging with critical frontline work and provide the workforce with the capacity to deliver an effective and urgent response to the public health emergency.

The Working with Vulnerable People scheme reduces the risk of harm to vulnerable people (including children) by preventing contact with people who have a history of inappropriate behaviour or who have not been assessed. This change is extending those who have been assessed and would have had an expiry during that time. On balance, noting the full assessment has occurred, the risk is low.

The changes also provides the Commissioner for Fair Trading discretion to renew expired Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registrations when it is considered that the renewal is appropriate because of the COVID-19 health emergency.

A person who has been granted a renewal of their expired WWVP registration will receive a paper notice that identifies their registration details which can then be used as evidence of their valid WWVP registration.

Further information about these changes can be found via the [Access Canberra website](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-%28wwvp%29-registration#!tabs-2b) ([https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-%28wwvp%29-registration#!tabs-2b](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-%28wwvp%29-registration#!tabs-2b)).

Copies of the WWVP legislation with these changes can be found on the [ACT Legislation Register](https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-44/) (<https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2011-44/>).

# About the Network

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is an organisation that is run by consumers for consumers. Our aim is to bring about a higher standard of health care in the mental health sector, through representation, lobbying and active involvement in new developments in the mental health sector.

Our organisation is extremely committed to the rights of mental health consumers. We promote a respectful and accepting system that involves Consumers, Carers and Professionals listening and respecting one another in an active healthy relationship. We also promote the development of support structures for all these groups.

All people who identify as being a mental health consumer are welcome to join the Network. An application form can be found on the following pages or by filling out and submitting via our website.

## Drop-In

The Network is very pleased to offer a venue for Consumers to Drop-In for a chat and a cuppa, participate in activities, and/or to use the computers or phones for their self-advocacy needs. As the ACT Government has announced a Public Health Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Network has physically closed this service to members for the foreseeable future. While physically closed, the Network will be holding online Drop-In for our members. See page 9 for details.

When we are able to physically recommence this service, we will notify members through our communications.



Level 2, Room 11  
The Griffin Centre  
20 Genge St, Civic



(02) 6230 5796



[www.actmhc.org.au](http://www.actmhc.org.au)



[www.facebook.com/actmhc/](https://www.facebook.com/actmhc/)



ACT  
Mental Health  
Consumer Network

## APPLICATION FOR PRIMARY MEMBERSHIP

**NB:** Primary membership is **free** for mental health consumers.

CONTACT DETAILS *Your name and at least one contact address/email is required	
Title:	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Other .....
First Name	
Surname:	
Address:	
Postal Address: (if different)	
Email:	
Home Phone:	
Work Phone:	
Mobile Phone:	
Other contact:	
<b>Do you have lived experience of mental illness?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please complete the rest of the form) <input type="checkbox"/> NO (do <u>not</u> complete the rest of this form. Ask for an Application for Associate Membership instead)
COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES:	
What is the <b>BEST</b> way for us to contact you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Home Phone <input type="checkbox"/> Post <input type="checkbox"/> Text <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone

Do you want to receive Newsletters and other information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes by email <input type="checkbox"/> Yes by post
How should we send information about AGMs and other major events?	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Address <input type="checkbox"/> Postal Address <input type="checkbox"/> Email
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
Year of birth:	
Aboriginal:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Torres Strait Islander:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Language other than English:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: ..... <input type="checkbox"/> No, English only
Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Intersex <input type="checkbox"/> Other: .....
<b>INTEREST and INVOLVEMENT IN NETWORK ACTIVITIES</b>	
Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation Training (SCR)	<input type="checkbox"/> I have completed Self-Advocacy Course <input type="checkbox"/> I have completed Consumer Representation Course <input type="checkbox"/> I want to attend ART <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not currently able to attend <input type="checkbox"/> I have completed a similar course at ..... (organisation)
Consumer Rep Program	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm interested in becoming a Consumer Rep <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not currently able to be a Consumer Rep
Policy and Projects Program	<input type="checkbox"/> I want to be involved in discussions and projects: In these areas: ..... ..... ..... <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not currently able to be involved
Network Events:	<input type="checkbox"/> I want to be involved in planning events <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not currently able to be involved

*Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this information*