



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

NETWORK NEWS

Movie Time

Contents

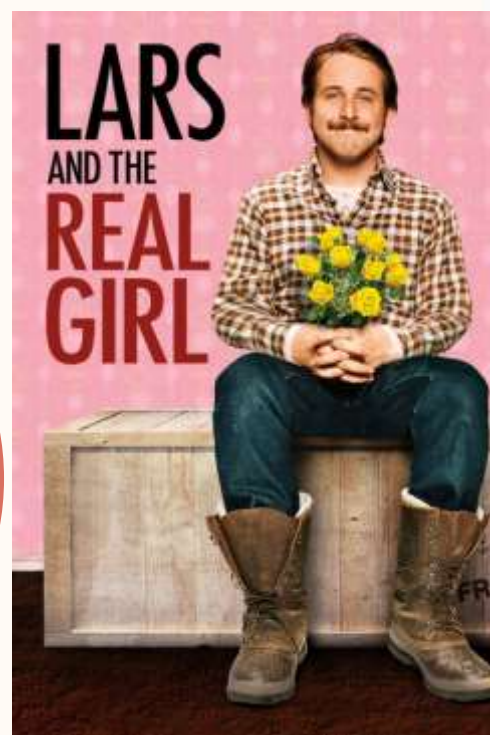
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Tuesday 21 June
11am to 1pm

Rated PG
Parental Guidance
Recommended.

(Mild coarse language,
violence and sexual
references)

Running time 106 mins



Extremely shy Lars (Ryan Gosling) finds it impossible to make friends or socialize. His brother (Paul Schneider) and sister-in-law (Emily Mortimer) worry about him, so when he announces that he has a girlfriend he met on the Internet, they are overjoyed. But Lars' new lady is a life-size plastic woman. On the advice of a doctor (Patricia Clarkson), his family and the rest of the community go along with his delusion.

All Members are welcome to attend. Light snacks will be provided.

From the EO's Desk



Welcome to the 2016 Winter edition of Network News.

I'm pleased to report that our staffing team has held strong over the past three months, with the team working together to achieve positive change alongside our Consumer Representatives and other members who engage in a variety of different ways.

One of our biggest recent achievements is in the completion of our 2016 Consumer Survey and subsequent strategic planning day with Board, staff and members working together to ensure an active and positive time of change and progress over the coming three years. The draft Strategic Plan will be reviewed by the Board at its June meeting and then forwarded out to all of our members so look forward to receiving your copy soon!

Speaking of achievements... the new *Mental Health Act 2015* (ACT) is finally here! After 10 long years, seven of which I was actually here at the Network for, all of the hard

work of Consumers and the community has finally paid off. We recently held an afternoon tea to celebrate this achievement and to recognise the consumer representatives who were instrumental in achieving the changes we see in the current Act. While there is a formal segment in this edition, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bradley Foxlewin, Patricia Green, David Lovegrove, Julie McMahon and Ben Matthews for their formal contributions to this process. I'd also like to thank all of the other consumers as well as other community members who are far too numerous to name... if you contributed, even in some small way, I thank you!

Another notable achievement is our recent running of the NDIS Peer Education Module that we created in 2014, which we will repeat late in June. This was made possible through a small grant of funding from MI Fellowship which has also made possible the creation of a new Peer Co-facilitator Course to support consumer to participate in paid roles as co-facilitators of our training programs. This training is scheduled to commence this week with a group of keen consumers ready to build on their skills.

We still hope to develop a mentoring module later this year. The development (or further development) of these education modules has started some internal discussion about how we can best meet the needs of Consumers through our education program. The end result of the discussion will be that we find a way to incorporate the NDIS and new training modules into our regular annual training. This is likely to mean that we run the Self-advocacy and Consumer Representation modules less frequently (currently running four times annually) to enable the other modules to be included each year. Keep an eye out for our new and improved training calendar ahead of the start of the 2017 training year.

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

Network Events

Monthly Drop-In events

The Network has created a monthly schedule of events during Drop-In times for members, as follows:

1st Tuesday of the month Craft Time

2nd Tuesday of the month Games Time

3rd Tuesday of the month Movie Time

The first of these events will be Movie Time on Tuesday 21 June (see page 1 for details).

If any readers have any specific skill or talent in a craft and wouldn't mind sharing that knowledge with other consumers, we'd be happy to hear from you about what you have to offer.

Also if any readers have any old board games, jigsaw puzzles etc. that they no longer use, you're welcome to bring them in to the Network for other consumers to use.

Additionally, staff from Mental Illness Fellowship will be attending Drop-In on Thursday 23 June for members to talk with about the new Peer Led Helpline!

June

Monday 13 June

Queen's Birthday Public Holiday (Office closed)

Tuesday 21 June 11am—1pm

Movie Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 21 June 11am—1pm

Network Board Meeting (ANU Commons)

Thursday 23 June 11am—1pm

MI Fellowship Drop-In: NDIS Peer led discussion

Tuesday 28 June 11am—1pm

Consumer Rep Forum (Drop-In Closed)

July

Tuesday 5 July 11am—1pm

Craft Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 12 July 11am—1pm

Game Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 19 July 11am—1pm

Movie Time (Members Area)

Thursday 28 July 11am—1pm

Consumer Rep Forum (Drop-In Closed)

August

Monday 1 August 5pm—7pm

Quarterly Community Forum (Meeting Rm 6, Lvl 1, Griffin Centre)

Tuesday 2 August 11am—1pm

Craft Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 9 August 11am—1pm

Game Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 16 August 11am—1pm

Movie Time (Members Area)

Tuesday 16 August 11am—1pm

Network Board Meeting (Meeting Rm 6, Lvl 1, Griffin Centre)

Tuesday 30 August 11am—1pm

Consumer Rep Forum (Drop-In Closed)

Network Update

New Mental Health Act Afternoon Tea Celebration

A sumptuous afternoon tea!

On 24 May 2016 we held a celebratory afternoon tea recognise and applaud the immense contributions of our consumer representatives into the development of the new *Mental Health Act (2015) ACT*.

To start off the afternoon, the Network Chair, Terri Warner, welcomed everyone, and presented the awards to members who worked tirelessly on the review of the New *Mental Health Act* in various roles. Congratulations to the following members for their contribution and dedication:

Bradley Foxlewin;
Patricia Green;
David Lovegrove;
Ben Matthews; and
Julie McMahon.

Following the awards, Simon Viereck (Mental Health Community Coalition ACT) and Marc Vandembroucke (Legal Aid ACT), presented on the new *Mental Health Act (2015) ACT* and what changes will have an effect on members. Lastly, Kate Rea presented on Capacity under the New *Mental Health Act*

2015 (ACT). There was an interactive panel session and members asked a range of questions.

A sumptuous afternoon was also catered, and members enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with other members and friends from the Network.

A special thank you to the Hellenic Club in the City for their support in organising this event.



Chair's Report

It's an exciting and challenging time to be the Chair of this organisation, with issues such as the introduction of the new Mental Health Act and the ACT NDIS trial at the forefront of everyone's minds, in addition to this being a strategic planning year. It was my great pleasure recently to host the Network's Mental Health Act afternoon tea, and to present awards to those consumer representatives who were instrumental during the review of the Act. The review was a monumental undertaking that has resulted in a piece of legislation that is human-rights based and respects the agency and capacity of consumers. What remains to be seen is how the Act will be applied and what changes will be made to policy and procedure.

I have also been engaged in advocacy in the area of the NDIS and mental health, speaking on ABC Radio about some of the access barriers, and writing a submission to the NDIA regarding the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Commissioning Framework. It's clear that this is an area where strong representation is needed, because we are already seeing the impact of changes to services as a result of the introduction of Individually Funded Packages.

To those of you I've not yet had the pleasure of meeting, I hope we will have the opportunity as the year progresses.

Terri Warner

Training dates for Self-Advocacy, Consumer Representation and other Community Education programs can be found on page 9.

Network presentation on Youtube

Back in November 2014, Petra Kallay (Community Education Coordinator) and Ben Matthews (previous Network Chair), attended the Integrating Mental Health into the NDIS Conference, organised by Informa Australia. Topics covered at this 2 day conference included scheme design, emerging lessons from the launch sites, the changing landscape for service providers, integrating the NDIS with other service systems and maximising choice and control.

Ben and Petra were invited to give a presentation titled "*Developing the Peer Workforce: NDIS Capacity Building Projects in the ACT*" which highlighted the NDIS training that Petra conducted in May and June of 2014 and about linked programs for Mental Health Peer Workers in the ACT .

A video of the presentation is now available to view on the Mental Health Australia Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hry45JY-7DM>

Events and Notices

TheMHS 2016 Bursary Registrations now open

TheMHS would like to support consumer representatives by offering free registration bursaries to the upcoming TheMHS Conference in Auckland, New Zealand this coming August.

Please note the bursary does not cover flights or meals. Applications and all other enquiries must be directed to TheMHS not to the Network.

TheMHS Conference 2016 features an exciting mix of speakers from all backgrounds, including clinicians, consumers, researchers, whanau, families, carers, policy makers and managers. TheMHS pride themselves on creating a very inclusive atmosphere for delegates who all come together as one to focus on the topic: the changing mental health and addiction system and the people at the heart of it all.

Through attending the conference, you will have the opportunity to:

- improve your understanding of mental health services including consumer advocacy and representation
- hear from other delegates about what works for them
- share your experience

This is an exciting opportunity and something you don't want to miss out on!

Applications for consumer bursaries are open until 17 June 2016 and must be made directly to TheMHS.

Visit the TheMHS website for more information (<http://www.themhs.org/pages/themhsconference-2016.html>).

Join the new, independent, virtual, national association of

Mental Health Consumers



Join us. Have your say.
Get involved.
Make a difference.

www.consumersaustralia.org

For people who self-identify as consumers, survivors, mad, or similar. By us, for us.

Information. Networks. Friends. Peers. Forums.
Stories. News. Human rights. Plans. Action. Change.

Nothing about us, without us, is for us.

New Peer-led Mental Health Helpline

ACT Helpline will be a peer-led service, operating from Monday to Friday, from 9am to 9pm.

Helpline is an information, support and referral service that operates during business hours. Helpline provides information to individuals with a mental illness, their family members and friends.

Helpline offers emotional support to individuals who call by providing an empathic and listening ear. Helpline is not a crisis line. Helpline also provides support to individuals in the form of a weekly outgoing phone call, at the request of their mental health worker.

Helpline assists callers to link in with clinical and community services, while providing direct referrals for carers to counselling services.

Helpline volunteers also speak with mental health professionals, including support workers and psychologists, and provides them information about the mental health system and services available to their clients.

Helpline has two volunteer intakes per year. Volunteers assist callers in navigating the mental health system and provide emotional support and information about the services available to individuals with

mental illness, their family and friends.

Applicants must express their interest in volunteering with Helpline using the online form on the [MI Fellowship volunteering page](#).

If you have any questions or require further information contact;

HelplineACT@mifellowship.org

Phone (02) 6246 7100 or mobile 0448 924 628.

An invitation to attend the launch of this new service is below.

You are formally invited to attend the launch of the

ACT Peer Led Mental Health Helpline

In partnership with Capital Health Network,
MI Fellowship is celebrating the launch of the
ACT Peer Led Mental Health Helpline

Please join us to learn more about this peer led and operated mental health helpline developed to provide information and support to individuals with a mental illness and their family and friends.

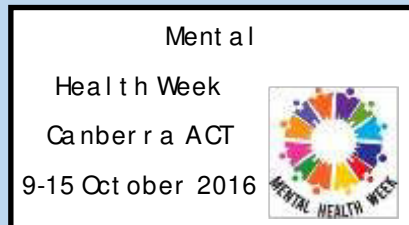
Wednesday 15th June
10.45am for 11.00am launch
Burringiri Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre
245 Lady Denham Drive, Central Canberra

Light refreshments provided
RSVP by Wednesday the 8th of June to Fiona Brown
(02) 6246 7100 or fbrown@mifellowship.org



Events and Notices

The Lived Experience
poetry anthology
featuring
mental health
consumers



POETRY EVENT

Are you a poet?

Have you written poems?

If so -

You are invited to submit up to two of your poems to be included in a book being launched during

Mental Health Week 2016

- Email your work to burmac@optusnet.com.au
- Or submit in written form to ACT Mental Health Consumer Network at Level 2, Room 11 Griffin Centre, 20 Genge Street, Canberra City ACT 2601.

For further information call Denise on 0422 422 041

This project is proudly supported by ACT Mental Health Consumer Network and will be Published by Burmac Publishing



Your Voice Your Choice project

Would you like to make a digital story about your NDIS journey?

MI Fellowship, with the help of MIEACT, is developing six digital stories that raise awareness about the NDIS among people with psychosocial disability, in particular people from diverse cultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and people who may be socially isolated and/or living in institutional settings. The digital stories will illustrate the different ways in which people:

- consider what constitutes a good life for them;
- set life goals and objectives
- make informed decisions; and
- maximise the opportunities the NDIS may afford them to exercise choice and control over the supports and services in their lives.

Only six places available! Contact Fiona Brown at MI Fellowship:

fbrown@mifellowship.org or 6246 7103



Carers ACT 2016 Mental Health Forum

"Are we there yet?" Untangling the changes to mental health in Australia

The Carers ACT 2016 forum "Are we there yet?" shall focus on bringing order and clarity to the many changes that are occurring in the mental health sector in the ACT and nationally. It is endeavoured to sketch a trajectory of where Australia is likely heading with current reform decisions and what still needs to be done.

With so much change, reform and innovation in the mental health space we must understand and examine the impact, challenges and opportunities of these changes.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme and its capacity to work in the mental health space; the overhaul of the ACT's mental health infrastructure, as well as the announcement of National mental health reforms; the question "What will Australia's mental health services look like 5 years from now?" will form the foundation of the 2016 forum.

We are delighted to welcome Ms Janet Hopkins, senior consultant at ConNetica as facilitator and guest speakers; Mr Frank Quinlan, CEO Mental Health Australia and Ms Katrina Bracher, Executive Director at ACT Health and more to come!

The four topics of the session are:

- National reform
- NDIS and psychosocial disability
- ACT Health and stepped-care
- What do we want our mental health system to look like anyway?

These sessions will be followed by a question and answer session with the guest speakers and local expertise in the mental health space.

Date: Wednesday 6 July

Time: 10:00am - 2:30pm

Venue: ANU Commons, Corner Rimmer and Kingsley St, Canberra City

Cost: \$10 Carers & Consumers / Students , \$25 Industry workers / other

RSVP: Register and pay via the Eventbrite website (<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/carers-act-2016-are-we-there-yet-mental-health-forum-tickets-25637751204>)

Free art workshops for tenants and renters

The Tenants' Union ACT and Belconnen Arts Centre are delighted to invite 12 ACT renters to participate in free visual art workshops as part of our International Tenants' Day 2016 celebrations!

If you or someone you know might be interested, please get in touch. Contact Nicola at Tenants' Union on 6247 1026 or info@tenantsact.org.au

When: Tuesdays from 10am until 12pm, 19 July until 6 September (8 weeks).

Where: Belconnen Arts Centre.

Please note there are limited places in the workshops, so be quick to get a place!

Places are only available for people who rent their accommodation in the ACT (private, public, social, community housing, boarders and lodgers, and also includes people staying in a refuge or shelter).

For more information: www.itd-tuact.com

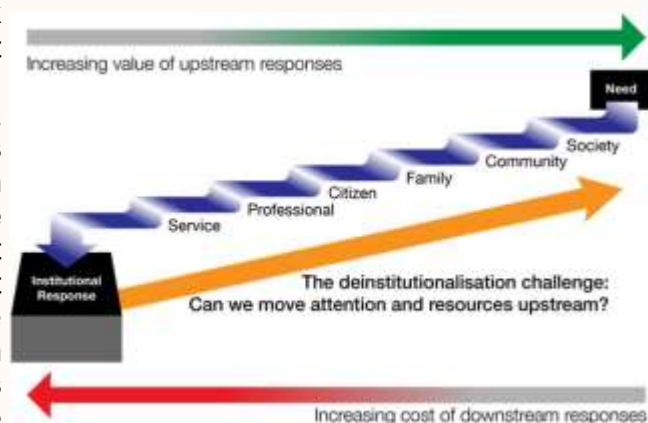
Policy Program Update

Early this autumn, the Network received distressing feedback about an incident at the Canberra Hospital. The Network was able to co-write a letter with Health Care Consumers Association (HCCA) to Health Minister Simon Corbell to raise these concerns. We are pleased to say that we received a response that conveyed deep regret and affirmative indication of what actions had been taken to ensure similar incidences would not occur in the future. As the peak systemic organisation for mental health consumers, it gave us great pride to witness change following our letter. We hope that other members feel able to come to us should they have systemic issues that need attention.

We are in the process of organising a forum to talk about older person's mental health. If you are passionate about this area or have a story to share, please get in touch. As always, your generous contributions are invaluable!

Over the past few months, the Network has been working with ACT Health, HCCA and Carers ACT to develop a 'person centred care statement'. Person centred care is 'health care that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values' (SA Health) of consumers. We are pleased to be involved in this process and look forward to sharing the statement and working on our own statement too.

I was grateful to the Network for sending me to the VICSERV Towards Recovery conference that took place on 19 and 20 May in Melbourne – please see Jenny Adam's fuller account of the conference on page 11.



“Control not choice is what we need!” was the captivating opening remark by the keynote speaker Simon Duffy at the conference. Simon explored what it means to be a true equal and what this means for how we think about mental health and the organisation of support. He argued that we don't need more services that work with people when they are already in crisis (downstream); instead we need to look at the causes (upstream), as illustrated in the above diagram. Themes from Simon Duffy's address echoed throughout the conference. Of particular interest to me was a session that focused on how peer workers are educating and running workshops, for consumers within the in-patient facilities and community based services in Melbourne, about the changes to Victoria's mental health act. There is a clear need here in the ACT for this type of peer work. In the next half of the year, I will be working on how we can move forward given these ideas.

Purity Goj

VicServ's Conference Report

VicServ's Mental Health Conference 2016, Towards Recovery Melbourne Convention Centre, 19-20 May 2016.

This conference was well attended, with representatives from other states as well as Victoria. On day one, Keynote speaker, Simon Duffy, Director, Centre for Welfare Reform (UK), raised the concept of citizenship as key to mental health recovery. He discussed the welfare state and how income inequality can contribute to the causes of mental illness, whereas community-led programmes can cause a drop in mental illness. He emphasised the importance of control by citizens in determining their own well-being, 'living together as equals in all our diversity.'

Highlights of Sessions Attended

Panel discussion regarding the NDIS implementation the following gives a flavour of the questions discussed:

- each trial site is constructed differently

causing confusion and misinterpretation;

- what supports are there for those not eligible for the NDIS;
- eligibility definition of lifelong disability impacting on those with mental illness (ie questioning whether it should be considered a disability);
- questions about capacity for choice and control, with the argument that an advocate makes a big difference;
- how are costs to service providers to train staff and other indirect costs to be covered by the NDIA? The argument was that the service providers cannot cover the additional costs and that this impacts their ability to continue or to provide quality service.

The emergence of local peer hubs across Victoria, the presenters spoke of the value of peer to peer support and the good will of the host organisations to allow hub members to meet on work time, and to take ideas back to management. They said that the biggest problem was being accepted as a peer worker rather than a

consumer by staff and treatment teams.

Co-design - described as people coming together as equals in design process; but the issue was raised that often the problem is that power still sits with the entity doing the co-design, they consult, but then do it their own way anyway. Co-design is about respect, authenticity, space to disagree, being partners.

Keynote speaker for Day Two, Mark Salzer, spoke of seeing 'the person' and not 'the patient'. Seeing not the diagnosis, medication and related problems of the 'patient' but the life, the aspirations, goals and perceptions of the 'person'. He advocated full participation in community life – valuing each individuals uniqueness and potential contribution; but he saw blocks to this in contemporary society such as stigma, discrimination, housing, employment etc. Community inclusion as not just a right of everyone, but a health necessity. Decreasing loneliness and isolation, and building social networks was vital – for example, programs like COMPEER and Circles of Support. Peer support and mutual aid was also highly beneficial.

Jenny Adams

Community Education Update

A warm welcome to all who are joining us for training during the chilly Canberra winter! Brrrrr!

New things!

The last few months have been busy with projects that we've been working on for a while finally coming to fruition! As a result, our family of workshops is gradually growing!

'Understanding the NDIS for Peer Workers' training

In early May we facilitated a revised and up-to-date version of this workshop, the purpose of which is to provide Mental Health Peer Workers knowledge and ability to assist a person with psychosocial disability in accessing/transition to the NDIS.

The 2 days of training explored a range of practical information and strategies including how to assist potential NDIS participants with decision making and planning, how the recovery approach related to the NDIS and identifying strategies for supporting someone when accessing the NDIS.

We had very positive feedback from the participants, including:

Entire content very well targeted and appropriate.

Well worth my while both personally and as a peer worker.

Very comprehensive, well put together.

If you would like to attend there is still one more round of training that is scheduled in July!

Co-facilitation training

The first 'pilot' round of this exciting new workshop is scheduled for 2-16 June 2016! After this, we are planning on running this

workshop on a regular basis.

This 3 day workshop is for experienced reps who are interested in developing their co-facilitation skills and participating in the facilitation of Network's Self-advocacy and Consumer Representation Training.

Co-facilitation Training includes

- The role of peer co-facilitators and using lived experience in a training environment
- Strategies to co-facilitate a fun and informative training session
- Tips for being an effective communicator
- Practice in facilitating group activities from the 'Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation' Training.

The first round of co-facilitated Self-Advocacy training is scheduled to start in July (10x sessions over 10 weeks).

We look forward to having a 'pool' of Network members who are willing and able to share their skills and experience with new training participants!

Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation Training

In March- April we were able to deliver two rounds of the Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation Training – one of the new features was showing the new video training resources! The videos made it possible for a range of experienced consumer representatives, and others who work in the Mental Health sector to share their knowledge and experience of self-advocacy and consumer representation. The feedback on these videos was positive! If you haven't had a chance to see them yet, come along to the network to check them out, or register for the next round of training!



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

Training Registration Form

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

(Suburb) _____ (Postcode) _____

Phone: (h) _____ (m) _____

Email: _____

1. Which training are you registering to attend? (*Training Name and Date*)

2. Do you have any additional needs? (*e.g. wheelchair accessibility, dietary requirements*)

3. Please explain why you want to attend the above training.

4. How did you hear about this course?

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for your registration. We will confirm your place as soon as possible.

Consumer Rep Program Update

Consumer representatives continue to do excellent work in bringing the mental health consumers perspective to policy making, project development and project management. The University of Canberra Public Hospital Committees are in full swing, with meetings recently held regarding the fit out of the living and bed rooms.

Dalane, Terri and I attended the Volunteering ACT Awards evening with Terri Warner, the Chair of the Network, nominated for Volunteer of the Year in Community Care and Health. The winner of this award, Jeanette Perkins, won the overall ACT Volunteer of the Year award as well, so competition was tough. A fun early evening was had by all.



Despite what the weather may look like out our windows, winter is upon us. This means that from May to September, all Consumer Representative Forums will be held during the day, from 11am to 1pm on the last Tuesday of the month here at the Network. If you are unable to attend during the day, it is essential that you continue to participate by providing your feedback in either written form or verbally to either Jen (Volunteer Coordinator) or Purity (Manager extraordinaire).

The Consumer Reps Forum is an important opportunity for consumer representatives to discuss issues being considered by their committees enabling consumer representatives to comment on issues that cross over the many committees. It is also a place for reps to replenish their advocacy energy as they can receive support and encouragement from other consumer reps. Reps and eligible reps are invited to attend whenever possible. The next Forum is on Tuesday 28 June.

Hearty congratulations to all the Network consumer representatives for their efforts in ensuring that the *Mental Health Act 2015* (ACT) was as consumer friendly as possible. As well as awarding the five consumers who either co-Chaired

the Strategic Oversight Group or were consumer reps on the Review Advisory Committee or Strategic Advisory Committee, the afternoon tea held at the Hellenic Club to celebrate the important roles the consumers had in drafting the Act, also provided a forum for consumers to learn what the new *Mental Health Act 2015* (ACT) means for them, and what directives can now be made.

Most importantly I will be away for two weeks from 2 July 2016. My family and I are jumping on a cruise boat to island hop around Melanesia for my Dad's 70th birthday. I am hoping for warmth, and very still seas.

Jen Nixon

Consumer Representative Appointments

Kerry Fry & Peter Dwyer: Transition to Recovery (TReC)

Jenny Adams - University of Canberra Public Hospital (UCPH) MHJHADS Operational Working Group

Chris Corcoran – HIP UCPH Project Control Group

Patricia Green - UCPH Operational Commissioning Steering Committee and Primary Mental Health Strategic Reform Group

Member article: Maladaptive Daydreaming Awareness

I've Lived A Million Lives, Not One Of Them My Own.

By Natalie S.

I remember every single day on the bus ride home from high school, I would daydream about what I was going to dream up when I got home. A strong hit of dopamine would rush through my veins just at the thought of escaping into a dream. I'd get home, go straight to my room, close the door & finally let my mind off her leash. I'd secretly play make believe. Act out stories & scenes, some realistic, most farfetched. I'd mouth words and speak to nobody, fully knowing they were not there, yet not caring one little bit, & imagined their response, evoking emotions in myself at an intensity that I did not feel in my everyday interactions. The characters in my dreams became closer to me than my friends & family. They made me so happy. I could spend hours & hours thinking up & feeling these intricate dream delights. I could introvert or extrovert my dreams but I loved to merge the two, blurring dreams & reality. I called it my mind movie, always playing in the background, often much more appealing than my physical reality.

I'd choose when I'd tune in, mostly when I was bored, scared or sad &

when I did not like or feel safe in my surroundings. But over time, my mind TV started turning on & off by itself. I missed big chunks of my days by listening to the dialogue in my head rather than what people around me were actually saying. And jumping into my dreams was so much fun that I let myself slip away, day after day, not noticing or caring for the neglect I had been exhibiting in my real life. I dedicated my energy, brain, heart & soul to my dream world. My infinite play pretend, consisting of my every love & desire, painted with my rainbow thoughts & feelings, was pulling me in further & further with her fairy floss kiss. Sometimes when I'd go too far, I'd get lost, catch myself in a daydream I didn't want to be in, & be powerless to stopping it. Because deep down every fibre of my being wanted to be there: Dreaming. When I would crash back down to reality, hours could have passed. I could crash & wake in my room or out with friends. It was like coming down off the strongest of drugs. I over-exhausted my brain constantly & needed to rest afterward.

My daydreams were not prejudice of whether they were introverted or extroverted. They only wanted to be thought into existence. They only wanted to consume me completely. They were my drug & I was my own dealer. Even when I tried to be present, my unconscious, pathologically addicted brain, would steal a dream drug or 11 & wander off into fantasy. I no longer controlled my dreams, they controlled me. Over time, through clever hiding & deep self-denial, I gradually

Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) — an extensive daydream that replaces human interaction with extensive fantasies that people envision in their own minds—Medical Daily

abandoned every important thing in my present world. No, I preferred to stay home & dream up hypotheticals & live in the maybes & could be's. My extreme fear of judgement & criticism of actually 'living' ignited my avoidant personality. My AvPD & my MD had this sick sort of relationship where they fed each other's every desire: to dream, to hide, to avoid real life. My hyper sensitive empath soul couldn't handle real life & the hurt & pain I'd endured in my past was ringing loud in my ears. My beautiful dreamy coping mechanism I created as a small child, a safe wonderland I could escape to when my parents were fighting, had malfunctioned. I'm faulty. Triggers are everywhere. Music, movies, nature... Anything that requires imagination, can send me to my mind palace. And I don't mind one bit, in fact I'm in love with my dreams. I can't get enough of them, they're bad for me, but I love them. My rebel heart pulses & pushes me to pretend & I let her.

But I don't have a life. I just dream.

Maybe life is a dream anyway & I'm just a neutral antenna. Or maybe I began dreaming instead of living because I never got any sleep at night... I've read that when that

happens, your dreams bleed into your days. Maybe I'm just fucking crazy. Maybe I'm Princess Dissociate & I should just accept it & wear my crown with pride. Or maybe I'm a maladaptive daydreamer. I suffered silently, thinking not another single soul did what I did or had whatever I had. When everybody else grew out of their imaginary friends, I moved into a castle with mine. I let them come out when I lacked feelings of happiness or love or if I felt loneliness, filling the void sufficiently with genuine feeling, & feeding my little broken soul her dream dope medicine.

I discovered 'maladaptive daydreaming' after years of research of my symptoms which never quite added up to any one title in the DSM IV. I knew I had a Fantasy Prone Personality & anxiety disorder but nothing ever seemed to pinpoint what I was going through. When I discovered Dr Eli Somer's 2002 paper, Maladaptive Daydreaming: A Qualitative Inquiry, everything changed. I finally found a name for my daydreaming addiction & found support in forums made by people all over the world who too have MD. Interestingly, I found that many others do not find their maladaptive daydreaming to interfere in their lives negatively and they certainly did not want their dreaming to stop. Just like any other addiction, pain is relative & underlying factors control whether the dreaming itself is constructive or destructive. With such little research done on the phenomenon, treatment is a distant dream & those with MD are left to their own vices. I've tried everything to fix my broken brain but I don't know how. It's clear that standard therapy is ineffective for my MD & it may be tens of years

before this disorder is recognised, let alone progressed far enough to be treated. (http://www.academia.edu/3342105/Maladaptive_Daydreaming_A_Qualitative_Inquiry)

I recently took part in a study being conducted by Eli Somer, Ph.D., (14 years on from the last research conducted) with a counterpart friend who does not have MD. We were asked a series of identical questions to identify MD diagnostically. The findings of this research project are to be published in 2017 and will hopefully highlight much needed information on this severely overlooked and under-researched concept.

I feel that there must be maladaptive daydreamers out there who are too scared to come forward or to admit to their behaviour, because society has deemed it as strange or wrong. I want to reach out to those who think they may have this unique gift/illness & be of support to them. Point them in the direction of what's really going on, rather than being treated for anxiety or depression, even FPP, when they know deep down its much richer than that. I'd love for the phenomenon of maladaptive daydreaming to become common knowledge, so diagnosis & eventual treatment can be undergone. But, as daydreaming is deemed as enjoyable & not taken seriously in science, no psychologists or psychiatrists will ever learn about or be able to properly treat those with MD. So all I can do is spread maladaptive daydreaming awareness, through my own lived experience.

I have dreams of starting a maladaptive daydreaming support group here in Canberra, & someday a foundation to fund mental health research in this area. It's a big dream, but it's a real one! And as an MDer, "real dreams" are

important, they may even be my very own attempt at self-treatment. Constructive dreaming, but of course I'll daydream away later, in fact I'm sort of in one right now...

Have you ever felt addicted to dreaming? Blurred the lines of dream & reality? Chosen to tune into the movie playing in your mind rather than the one on the screen? Are your fantasies so powerful that you neglect the tangible & try to merge your two worlds? Do you find that your daydreams are so rich that you must extrovert them by mouthing words or speaking aloud? Can music or film send your brain off onto writing its own story & you'd rather be there than reality? Do you find yourself daydreaming about your life rather than living it? Daydreams are wonderful, beautiful things when they don't interfere with your day to day life, but if you feel you are living in an imaginary world, replacing human contact with imagined contact & it is causing you distress, then they have become maladaptive.

To be an MDer is an extraordinarily intense, beautiful, frustrating, addictive, sometimes scary thing. It's just like a drug. I'm a full blown dream addict, & I'm my own dealer, so how am I to stop? I'm hardly present, involuntarily living in the confines of my rainbow brain rather than the here & now. Maybe MD is just an overactive imagination that never found its outlet. I don't really know what it is, but I know I need help. And I don't want MDers to continue slipping through the mental health system because Maladaptive Daydreaming Disorder isn't yet considered a mental illness or mental health issue, just sneezed at by doctors as silly daydreaming. I urge everybody to research this phenomenon & educate yourself. I hope even just one person reads this & learns something.

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, and/or to use the computers or phones for their self-advocacy needs most week days. Due to the nature of the Networks business, there are times when the Drop-In service unfortunately will be closed, and we try to keep members informed of any closures.

A notice of expected opening times for the current and following week is posted at the front door to the office.

Our Drop-In hours are 11am – 1pm, Monday to Friday.



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



(02) 6230 5796



www.actmhc.org.au



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:	
Do you have lived experience of mental illness?	<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 BEST 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
DEMOGRAPHICS	
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:
INTEREST and INVOLVEMENT IN NETWORK ACTIVITIES	
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