

NETWORK NEWS

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Let them make cake!



Felicity Maher (pictured), a recipient of the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Scholarship in 2022 (awarded at the Mental Health Month Awards), brought into our office one of her cake creations. Felicity used her scholarship to continue her education in cake-making, which is something she really enjoys doing. If you look at our Winter 2017 newsletter, you can see a fabulous handbag cake Felicity made.

This is a great example of what can be achieved through this scholarship!

Nominations for 2023 will soon be opening. Please check the Mental Health Month website for Scholarships and Grants details. We will also be forwarding out this information to members as we become aware of the details.

AUTUMN 2023

Offering You a Voice

From the CEO's desk



Dear Readers

Welcome to the first edition of the Network News for 2023... apologies for missing our usual Autumn edition!

We have had an extremely busy year so far, coupled with having several staff on planned and unexpected leave. We had to make some

decisions around our capacity and the newsletter unfortunately didn't make the cut with Val and Jen both on extended leave. I'm pleased to report we now have everyone back on deck and plugging away at the many things going on in the mental health space.

I'd like to extend a belated welcome to Dia Andrews who kindly and swiftly stepped in to fill the role of Policy and Participation Coordinator while Jen has been away since the beginning of the year. Dia initially applied for our peer educator role and was a standout applicant with a strong background in policy and academia, hence it was an easy call to make when we needed to unexpectedly fill Jen's proverbial shoes. Dia has included an introduction in this edition to help you get to know her a little better.

Petra delivered her first hybrid style courses this year in both Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation. This led to several new members becoming eligible to be Consumer Reps, some of whom have already started nominating and even selected for Consumer Rep positions! A warm welcome to our new eligible Consumer Reps: Katie Price, Luke Lake, Assunta Arioli, John Forsey and Jeremy Michael. In addition, a warm welcome back to former Consumer Rep and Chair of the Board – Jewel McMahon. We look forward to working with you all in the coming months and years! Ben has also begun spreading the word and educating consumers and the community about consumer rights through My Rights, My Decisions. He's nearing the end of his qualification in training and assessment, after which we look forward to building some new peer education tools and workshops.

Val's hard work and precious time has finally paid off, with our new website live and nearing completion. He has also worked hard to support the recreation of our brochures and other stationery after our postal address changed. The new stationery is bright, fun and informative and you'll see it start to roll out soon. Eva has been working hard for our Consumer Reps and related stakeholders to keep the Consumer Rep Program running smoothly which is no

easy feat! Jo has been busily coordinating Drop-In including free legal advice for consumers on the first Thursday of every month. Coming up on 29 June 2023, we have the Mental Health Commissioning Team coming in to chat with consumers about their needs in the community mental health space.

We were pleased to welcome members and other consumers at our Beginning of Year BBQ. While we had fewer people than in previous years, this was not unexpected given the weather and COVID-19 still doing the rounds, but a great time has had by all. We hope to hold a second BBQ later in the year when the weather warms up a bit again.

I was very lucky to have been one of the recipients of one of Felicity Maher's lovely cakes (see front page)! It's fantastic to see our small scholarships making a difference for consumers who want to build their skills. Look out for the applications in a couple of months' time if you have been thinking of learning a new skill (or building an existing one) but might need a little financial help.

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 Update

New website

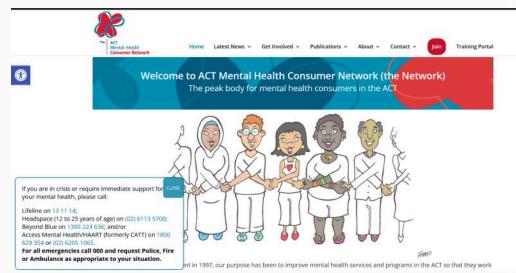
Our new website went live in early February 2023 and can be viewed at https://actmhcn.org.au/

We are pretty excited that this project is entering its end phase. There are a few more areas to be finalised before using testing can be done and we are working on getting things completed to do this very soon.

Some new features of this site that automate some administrative tasks are:

- Dedicated pages to find out about upcoming events and policy consultations/forums for consumers and the latest news (read more on page 10)
- Self register to attend events
- Sign up as a member online

Following on from the website, we are looking into how to make our email communications more interactive and engaging.



Updated Publication Styling

In the near future, members will notice that the branding on our letterhead, newsletter and brochure etc. will look a little bit different.

When our mailing addresses changed, we were unable to update existing document templates that used our branded images with this detail. We also took the opportunity to make some design and content tweaks on templates and items like our brochures to make them more useful and accessible.

We look forward to start using these templates and receiving your feedback on how you think they look.

Introduction to Dia

Over the past few months, members would have noticed a change in our working team. Dia Andrews joined the Network staff team in February 2023 as the interim Policy Coordinator while Jen has been on extended leave. Dia will continue in the Policy and Participation program now that Jen is back in a supportive role.

Dia hit the ground running, holding several policy forums, facilitating the Policy Reference Group meetings, and preparing submissions.

Here's a little introduction from Dia.

My name is Dia, and I have joined the Network to fill in for Jen Nixon while she is on leave until mid-year.

The Policy Coordinator role with the Network is actually my first in the mental health and community services sector. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I was a Postdoctoral Researcher with the Public Service Research Group at the University of New South Wales Canberra.

However, as it was for many members of the Network, the pandemic was a period of particular hardship for me.

Consequently, being invited by the Network to step into the Policy Coordinator role has been both personal lifeline and novel challenge.

And what a challenge it has been! In late December last year, Canberra Health Services provided the Network with ten separate procedures for feedback from consumers.

Working closely with Deigh, Val and the Network's wonderful members and Policy Reference Group, we've completed all of these submissions along with a couple more.

Meeting with Network members and stakeholders to discuss and advise on such a diverse range of matters has been a distinct highlight for me.

Being able to engage very directly with issues and processes that directly affect the quality of mental health services that we rely on has been a very welcome and refreshing change from academic publishing!

I'd like to thank everyone on the team for making my transition into the role as smooth as possible as well as all the members who have taken the time to share their knowledge and experience over the past few months.

My Rights, My Decision Workshops

Ben has recommenced the My Rights, My Decisions (MRMD) workshops for consumers and workers.

For anyone unfamiliar with MRMD, this is a resource available to mental health consumers to become informed about some aspects of the *Mental Health Act 2015* (ACT) and put in place measures around their mental health treatment and lifestyle factors (such as pet care etc.), should they become unwell and need hospitalisation in the future.



At our FREE workshops, consumers will learn about such things as who Nominated Persons are, what Advance Agreements and Advance Consent directions are, what decision-making capacity is and how to complete the MRMD Form Kit etc.

Initially these workshops will be held at the Network office, with expansion to other community mental health venues expected in the near future.

There are also workshops available to workers who work with or support mental health consumers.

If you are interested in attending an upcoming workshop, please see our upcoming events page on our website and register online (https://actmhcn.org.au/events/). For any questions or more information contact Ben by email to peer. education@actmhcn.org.au or call (02) 6145 0072.

Start of Year (SoY) Barbecue

The Network held a barbecue for members and other consumers on Thursday 16 March 2023.

This was in lieu of our usual end of year barbecue in December 2022, which due to various factors we were unable to organise.

Still we saw a great turn out of members come along throughout the event and get together.

At this event we took the opportunity to acknowledge the 5 years of service that Chris Corcoran completed as a member of the Network Board. An award was presented to Chris by Network Chair Bianca Rossetti (pictured below right).

Big thank you to Board members Maree, Bianca and Lachlan for helping out on the day.







Drop-In

The Network continues to provide a weekly Drop-In for members and other consumers to come in and use, either in-person or online.

Drop-In is held on Thursdays from 10am to 1pm, with online Drop-In held via Zoom from 10am to 12pm.

Drop-In has computers and phones for consumers to use for their self-advocacy needs. Online Drop-In continues providing a platform for social contact purposes.

To join the Online Drop-In click on or type in the following link and enter the Meeting ID and/or passcode as needed:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85389263153?pwd=MVNkaWZIR21wWDMrSjY1MVhkZ2JjQT09

Meeting ID: 853 8926 3153

Passcode: 991826

A dedicated Drop-In Officer is available to help consumers accessing our facilities or in need of information.

At times, due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances, Drop-In may be cancelled or need to close a little early. If this happens, we try to give members as much notice as possible.

We are seeking some ideas from members about what type of activities would be of interest in attending Drop-In. If you have any ideas, please forward them to Jo by email to dropin@actmhcn.org.au



Occasionally special events are organised for Drop-In. These can be social, educational or creative. See the Upcoming Events page on our website (https://actmhcn.org.au/events/) to see what is coming up and to register.

On **Thursday 29 June 2023** at Drop-In will be hosting a consultation workshop between consumers and the Mental Health Commissioning Team (MHCT) from ACT Health. This workshop will run from **10am to 12pm**. Consumers are welcome to attend either in our office or online via Zoom.

The MHCT is responsible for delivering the Mental Health Subsector commissioning project. This project looks at how Non-Government Organisation (NGO) mental health services in the ACT are funded by ACT Health, with the aim to purchase a system of interconnected services which support the mental health and wellbeing of Canberrans.

In this session the MHCT are hoping to hear from consumers about what they want to see in NGO funded mental health services in the ACT and contribute to the investment strategy for the 2024/25 Mental Health Subsector commissioning process.

You can register to attend online via our website or send Jo an email at dropin@actmhcn.org.au to get the Zoom details or call 02 6230 5796.

Mental Health Justice Clinic Drop-Ins

A solicitor from the Mental Health Justice Clinic will be providing a FREE Drop-In service at the Network on the first Thursday of every month between 10am and 12pm.



The Clinic offers free, independent and confidential legal services in the following areas:

- **Social housing tenancy** (both public and community housing tenants)
- o Including advice on transfer applications, repairs, and receiving notices to remedy and notices to vacate

Centrelink

o Including advice on debts and Disability Support Pension eligibility and appeals

Discrimination

o Including advice on making a complaint to the ACT Human Rights Commission or the Australian Human Rights Commission

Employment

- o Including advice on termination of employment and being bullied at work
- Health and disability services complaints
- Vulnerable person complaints

The solicitor will be able to provide one-off legal advice and assist with any referrals. For more complex matters, the solicitor will book you in for a lengthier consultation with the Clinic. No appointment is necessary.

If you are unable to make it during Drop-In you can still self access the service by email to info@canberracommunitylaw.org.au or call (02) 6218 7900.

This service is not just for members of the Network, but is open to all people with mental illness in the ACT. Please spread the word about this valuable service!

Dates for the remaining Clinics for 2023 are:

- Thursday July 6
- Thursday August 3
- Thursday September 7
- Thursday October 5
- Thursday November 2
- Thursday December 7

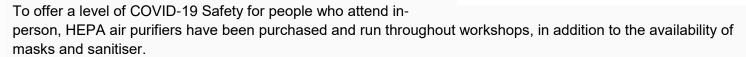
Back to the Classroom

It has been a long time but we are pleased to announce that our core training workshops in Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation welcomes participants back to attend in-person!

In March 2023, the Network ran our Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation workshops in a hybrid format. Hybrid is a mix of online (using Zoom) and in-person attendance.

Offering our training in this format has seen a big increase in the number of consumers completing courses as it offers greater flexibility for participants. It allows continued participation when unwell, or when travelling. This round saw one member participate online while in New Zealand!

As this is the first time doing our training in this manner, there were some teething issues, which will be smoothed out for future workshops.



We look forward to continuing to provide our hybrid workshops into the future.



Online Learning in **Development**

To make our training even more accessible, over the past year the Network has been exploring options in how we can offer self-paced online learning to consumers. The purpose of the online learning platform is to complement our existing workshops.



Over the next six months, Petra will be working on the creation of online modules to support consumers who need this level of flexibility. If you are interested in participating in trials, please contact Petra at education@actmhcn.org.au

To start working out what would work, what doesn't work etc. in online learning platforms, we held two consultations to hear from consumers who have experience using such platforms. In both consultations we got some good feedback on user issues as well as possible topics.

At this point this project is still in a planning stage and our online learning platform is anticipated to be accessible through our website. If you look at our site, you will see we have made space for a Training Portal.

More on these developments will be announced in future newsletters.

Consumer Representative Program update

Following the completion of the recent round of Self-Advocacy and Consumer Representation training, we welcome all the participants who are now eligible to be Consumer Representatives to our team!

We would also like to welcome back Matthew Martin to the CRP. Matthew has previously been a very active representative for consumers.

CRP Forums continue to be well attended, with interesting Masterclasses being regularly included. Masterclasses are short courses that can either refresh existing skills or develop new ones for Consumer Reps to use during their duties, as well as information gathering on specific topics. Recent



examples of Masterclasses include Developing an online learning platform, Providing effective feedback, and Discussion on people's experiences with Digital health record.

The Consumer Rep catch ups continue to be held on alternating months from the CRP Forum. Consumer Reps can either attend in-person or online and it is a great opportunity to connect with other Consumer Reps and discuss any aspects or issues around representing that they encounter.

MHJHADS committees resuming

As we reported in previous editions of Network News, throughout 2022 Mental Health, Justice Health, Alcohol and Drugs Service (MHJHADS) conducted a governance review of their committee needs and processes. This review resulted in several committees being suspended and representative opportunities limited. We are pleased to report that this review has now been finalised and that the majority of suspended committees and representative appointments have resumed.

Changes that have come out of the review include the creation of a new Mental Health Outcomes Working Group – a subgroup under the current Mental Health Commissioning Advisory Group. The purpose of this working group is to look at the outcomes for the broader mental health sector and how these can influence and be a part of the current commissioning process, as well as future work.

The Territory Wide Mental Health Services program area governance committee meetings have been cancelled permanently. The Consumer Rep on this committee has been transferred to be the Consumer Rep on the Adult Community Mental Health Services (ACMHS) Governance Committee. The role of the committee is to provide a forum for strategic priorities and governance of the Adult Community Mental Health Services Program area.

Since January, we have been busy conducting recruitment rounds to fill in committee vacancies that are continuing since they began resuming to be held and/or as Consumer Rep 2-year terms come to an end.

Policy bits and bobs

New policy consultations and forums website page



On our new website we have a dedicated page for upcoming consultations with consumers. You can access this page at https://actmhcn.org.au/upcoming-consultations/

This is to help these types of events to stand out from our Upcoming Events calendar, which lists a variety of other events.

This page lists when our policy consultations and forums with consumers will be held, details about what will be discussed and the ability to register attendance for either face to face or online.

Documentation for these consultations will only be made available upon registration. As online registrations are a new thing for us, if documentation is not provided while registering, please contact Jen by email to policy@actmhcn.org.au or give us a call 02 6230 5796 to have a copy provided to you.

As we were having a new site built in 2022, several submissions from May to December 2022 were held off on being uploaded until the new site went live. These submissions as well as new ones in 2023 are now available from our website (https://actmhcn.org.au/submissions).

Policy Reference Group back up and running!

As mentioned in Dia's introduction, the Policy Reference Group (PRG) has been meeting this year to help the Policy program provide feedback to Canberra Health Services on a range of mental health related procedures.

For readers unfamiliar with this group, the PRG is a dedicated group of consumers who advise the Network staff on systemic mental health issues and contributes to systemic policy development. The PRG is the brains trust for the Network regarding policy issues that arise from time to time.

Following the third PRG meeting for the year, by the end of May the PRG will have completed the tranche of document reviews provided to us by Canberra Health Services at the end of 2022.

Anyone with a lived experience of mental illness and/or mental disorder who is interested in mental health systemic advocacy and can attend a meeting once every two months is eligible to be a member of the PRG.

If you are interested in participating in the PRG in the future when places become available, please email through an Expression of Interest to Jen at policy@actmhcn.org.au or call (02) 6145 0074 or let us know in person if you attend one our events.



NMHCC Forum Report



Below is a report from Paul Thompson, the ACT Consumer Representative on the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, following the mid-March 2023 meeting for your information.

Caitlin O'Brien of Mental Health Suicide Prevention, Department of Health and Alex Hains, Executive Director, National Mental Health Commission were guest presenters on the first day.

According to Caitlin O'Brien, current Government priorities are the Voice to Parliament, Budget Repair, Cost of Living, Social Equity, Workforce Shortages, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

The Federal Government is committed to the establishment of a National Carers Strategy. There is a need to increase awareness of the Carer Gateway and increase its utilisation.

Mental Health Australia wants a relocation of Mental Health Services taken out of hospitals and returned to homes and the community.

Forum members discussed their own potential Strategic Priorities. Some of them included:

- Lived Experience
- Social Determinants
- Consumer Carer Leadership and Advocacy
- Mental Health Workforce
- HR Access
- Advocacy
- Human Rights
- Psychosocial Disability
- Suicide Prevention

Participants discussed whether the Forum should invite other organisations such as Carers Australia, GROW or Lived Experience to send delegates or form a partnership with the forum. The potential formation of peak consumer and carer bodies may have a bearing on this consideration.

Participants were told about the Finding North Network website, a resource for various mental health therapies and services (see https://findingnorthnetwork.com.au/)

A new website is being developed by the forum. It is a Lived Experience Digital Library. Some articles are free and some are accessible by subscription only. You are able to utilise the search field to locate research documents and have the opportunity to write to the contributors of subscribed articles to see if they will offer concessions or free use.

A Lived Experience Governance Framework is being developed which is a large and comprehensive document. Still in confidence until approved by the forum.







TheMHS Forum 2023

From the Margins to the Mainstream: How to harness innovation to create best-practice responses to crisis and adversity?

21 - 22 March 2023 X Mercure Sydney, Australia

Consumer Representatives, Bianca Rossetti and Maree Pavloudis, attended TheMHS (The Mental Health Services) Forum on 21 – 22 March 2023. The theme was *From the Margins to the Mainstream: How to harness innovation to create best-practice responses to crisis and adversity?*

The Forum was about suicide prevention and the best practices when dealing with suicide prevention in Australia and New Zealand.

Below is a summarised report of what Bianca and Maree each found interesting.

Bianca highlighted that The Mental Health Services forum was insightful in identifying what is happening Nationally for suicide prevention. The event began by reviewing the National Suicide Prevention Strategy focusing on the implementation of the outcomes framework and relevant workforce strategy with a focus on lived experience workforce. The consensus is that mental health effects whole life and should be part of ALL government portfolios not just within health.

The workforce strategy and the importance of peer workers was strongly presented including having people with lived experience (LE) employed in multiple areas to support well being. Strategies need to be deliberate and well purposed that embracing leaders and enables change. This means having LE in Emergency Department, prevention recovery focused services and at all levels of health and well being services. Services that are important are alcohol and drugs, employment services and social media representation. Currently the interagency Focus group is working on humanising support in all areas to provide safe passage for those seeking support. Key success comes from strong positive leadership, having champions that acknowledge and respect people with LE and environments that enable conversations, personal connections and responses.

It is important that the network works towards a peak alliance, supports the training for peer workers and advocates for peer workers to work within multiple levels in the mental health sector. Maree found the grassroot approach to Suicide Prevention the most interesting. This is usually started by people that have lived experience or a loved one or friend that have lived experience. She heard presentations of some grassroot initiatives from Australia and New Zealand. She heard about different programs for Suicide Prevention in both countries.

One presentation that she found interesting was the Murrumbidgee Suicide Prevention Program conducted by Wellways. They have a Way Back Support Service that help people in the Murrumbidgee community. This service involves Wellways, the Primary Health Networks (PHNs), Local Health Districts (LHD), police and ambulance services. The program provides practical tools for families and individuals to help them get through the first three months after a suicide attempt.



Support Services



The <u>Canberra Head to Health Centre</u> is a free mental health centre to help Canberrans find the mental health support they need.

The Head to Health Centre has been running several groups the more popular being the *Men's Resilience Group* and the Weekly Social Group.

You can read more about the Centre and how they can help you via their website: https://canberraheadtohealth.com.au/

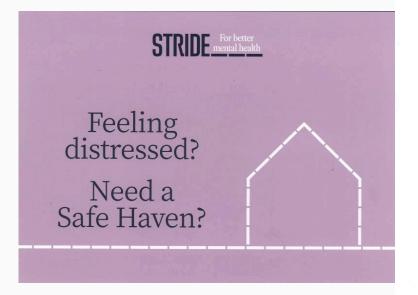
No appointment or referral required.

To contact the centre you can either call 1800 595 212, request a call via their website or visit them at their location Shop G7 (Ground Floor), 14 Childers Street (corner of Childers and Allsop Street) Canberra City

Opening times are:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

Tuesday and Thursday (extended hours) 8.30am to 6.30pm



Safe Haven

We provide a safe space to talk for adults and young people 16+ in emotional distress.

Talk to our caring support team today.

We're here to help. Walk in, no referral needed.



This service has been made possible by funding from ACT Health.

Open 5 days a week, Tuesday to Saturday, 3pm to 10pm 56 Lathlain Street, Belconnen



0421 154 147



hello@stride.com.au

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.

New postal address

A reminder that the Network was required to change our mailing address in November 2022.



Our new mailing address is: ACTMHCN, GPO Box 836, Canberra ACT 2601

Our new Reply Paid address is: **ACTMHCN**, **Reply Paid 83404**, **Canberra ACT 2601**

Mail redirection to our new GPO Box will expire in November 2023.

Please note if you need urgent assistance in finding a referral or need information, please call us on (02) 6230 5796.





MEMBERSHIP TYPES AND CRITERIA

APPLICATION FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

NB: Individual membership is free.

 Primary Membership Has lived experience of mental illness Lives and/or accesses services in the ACT 		May have lived experience of mental illness but does not live and/or accesses services in the ACT Is a carer or support person of someone with mental illness Supports the aims of the Network (Associate memberships need to be renewed annually)			
I AM APPLYING FO	R:				
☐ Primary Membership		☐ Associate Membership			
		and at least one contact address/email is required			
Title:	☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Mx ☐ Other				
Preferred Pronouns	☐ He/Him ☐ She/Her ☐ They/Them ☐ Other				
First Name:					
Surname:					
Address:					
Postal Address:		ercanations entered entrachants			
(if different)					
Email:					
Home Phone:					
Mobile Phone:					
Other contact:					

You can also join online at https://actmhcn.org.au/join/



COMMUNICATION PR	REFERENCES:	SAFRON AS			
What is the BEST way	☐ Email	☐ Home Phone	☐ Post		
for us to contact you?	□ Text	☐ Mobile Phone			
Do you want to receive	☐ Yes by email	☐ Yes by post	MARKET A		
Newsletters and other information?	e i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i				
How should we send	☐ Home Address	☐ Postal Address	☐ Email		
information about	Please note we are	Please note we are required by law to provide all members			
General Meetings?	with notice and othe Meetings.	with notice and other documentation about General Meetings.			
DEMOGRAPHICS					
Year of birth:					
Aboriginal:	☐ Yes ☐ No				
Torres Strait Islander:	☐ Yes ☐ No				
Language other than English:	□ Yes:				
	□ No, English only				
Gender:	☐ Woman ☐ Man ☐ Transgender ☐ Non-Binary				
307.5	□ Other:				
Please contact me ab		ers Only)			
☐ Discussions,	forums and projects				
☐ Volunteer opp	ortunities (with reimbu	rsement of costs)			
☐ Helping with €					
/					

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