



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

Network News

Summer 2023

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Thank you!



A special thank you event was held for all of the Network's volunteers on 7 December 2023, which overlapped with our End of Year celebration for members and associates. This celebration saw a number of volunteers attend throughout the day.

At this celebration a number of key milestone acknowledgements were awarded to Network staff and volunteers.

Petra Kallay, Jen Nixon, Thi Nha Tran and Patricia Green each received an acknowledgement trophy for reaching 10 years service, with Rose Beard receiving a trophy for 5 years service. These trophies were presented to recipients by our new Chair, Paul Thompson.

Congratulations to Petra, Jen, Thi Nha, Patricia and Rose!

Further images from the event can be found on page 13.

In Memory of Peter

It is with heavy hearts and a huge sense of loss that we honour the memory of our dear friend, Peter Dwyer. For over two decades, Peter was a tireless advocate for mental health consumers, leaving a deep mark on the Network and the lives of those he worked with. Today, as we say our final goodbyes, we reflect on the impact he had on the Network and the broader mental health community.

Peter's commitment to community causes was incredible. Throughout his membership, he engaged closely with every facet of our programs, dedicating his time and energy to make a difference. Serving most extensively as a valued Board member and Consumer Representative, Peter provided invaluable insights and guidance, shaping the direction of our efforts. More recently, his passion for NDIS support and education, bush therapy, and his determination to effect change within the Labor party filled much of his time and effort.

Beyond his advocacy work, Peter had the ability to uplift and brighten the lives of those around him. With his trusty ukulele in hand, he strummed melodies that filled the air with joy for many. His genuine warmth and compassion made him a cherished presence in our community.

As we bid farewell to Peter, we extend our deepest condolences to his friends and loved ones. We acknowledge the loss they are experiencing and offer our support during this difficult time. Though Peter may no longer be with us, his legacy of advocacy and compassion will forever remain in our hearts.

Let us remember Peter not only for his remarkable contributions but also for the person he was—a kind, spirited, and dedicated advocate.

Peter, rest in peace knowing that your impact on our Network and the mental health community will forever be remembered. We are grateful for the time we shared and the inspiration you brought to our lives. Farewell, dear friend, until we meet again.



Since Peter's passing we have learned that a funeral service will not be held.

A public Testimonial and Celebration of his adventurous life will be held at the Canberra Quaker Meeting House, 17 Bent Street, Turner at 3pm on Saturday 3 February 2024.

Network Updates

New mailing lists starting January 2024

Prior to our last newsletter going out, members were advised that the Network will be tailoring our communications to be relevant to individual interests, based upon updated information from our new membership forms.

An online form was made available for members to easily update their communication preferences and other details with us to help compile these new mailing lists, which will mostly be used for email communications. For our members who receive the newsletter by post, a copy of this form and a reply paid envelope to easily return this to us was provided.

A big thank you to the members who have responded by completing this form.

From late January 2024, we will begin using these new mailing lists. Prior to using these new mailing lists, a general notice will be sent out advising of the change. This will mean that unless you have told us what you want to hear from us about, you won't be receiving certain communications from us. Newsletters and AGM documentation will continue to be sent to all members as indicated on your membership form.

There is still time to update your details and communication preferences. Click on the button to be taken to the online form and update your details or contact us for a hard copy.

End of Year closing period and Free Meal Guide

As we slowly reach towards the end of 2023, the Network will be having a small shut down period over the Christmas/New Years period.

Our office will be closed from 3pm Wednesday 20 December 2023 and reopen 9am Monday 8 January 2024.

The Network wishes all members a safe and restful end of year. We acknowledge that 2023 has brought its own set of unique challenges, with the cost of living having a significant impact on consumers.

Volunteering ACT have compiled a 2023/24 Holiday Season guide. The guides are in three sections:

- 1) Where to find a free meal
- 2) Services that are operating over the holiday season
- 3) Service closures over the holiday season.

Copies can be picked up from the Community Info Hub or online via the [Volunteering ACT website \(https://www.volunteeringact.org.au/about/publications-and-reports/info-guides/\)](https://www.volunteeringact.org.au/about/publications-and-reports/info-guides/)

Emergency Mental Health Support

If you require support for your mental health over the end of year period, please contact any of the following services:

- Lifeline 13 11 14 (24/7)
- Access Mental Health (including the crisis triage team) 1800 629 354 (24/7)
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467 (24/7)
- Safe Haven Belconnen (3pm - 10pm, Tues - Sat) 0421 154 147, 56 Lathlain Street, Belconnen



Street view of the Community Information Hub. Source Google Maps.

Drop-In

Wellbeing Priori-Tea

Just before our Beary Lovely Mornings, a Wellbeing Priori-Tea was held during Drop-In for members and other tenants within the Griffin Centre etc. The Priori-Tea was held both online and face-to-face, and saw a mix of members and Griffin Centre tenants attend.

The purpose of the Priori-Tea is for workplaces to take a bit of time out and have a focus discussion on mental health in people's lives.



Our Drop-In service is now closed for 2023.

Drop-In will resume on Thursday 18 January 2024, with the monthly Mental Health Justice Clinic resuming on Thursday 1 February 2024.

We would like to give special thanks to everyone who has come to Drop-In throughout 2023. We hope you were able to learn new things or become informed about issues that can be of future benefit.

Our last Drop-In was on Thursday 7 December and was used as an end of year celebration for members, which overlapped with the Network volunteer end of year gathering. Photos from the celebration are on page 13.

New Submissions available

The Policy and Participation program has engaged in a number of conversations with consumers to provide input into the development of policy submissions.

Submissions compiled from consumer input from September 2023 and are:

[Canberra Health Services Policy and Procedure: Consumer Feedback Management;](#)

[Canberra Health Services Procedure: Intimate Body Care and/or Examination of Patients/ Clients by Health Care Workers;](#)

[Canberra Health Services Guideline: Suicide Prevention and Intervention Framework at the Alexander Maconochie Centre/ACT Court Cells – Adult;](#) and

[Canberra Health Services Guideline: Forensic Consultation and Intervention Service \(FoICS\) \(adults and adolescents\)](#)

To broaden the scope of the submission development of the Canberra Health Services Suicide Prevention and Intervention Framework at the Alexander Maconochie Centre/ACT Court Cells (Adult), the Network also held conversations with residents at the Gawanggal Mental Health Unit (previously known as Brian Hennessy House) in Bruce around the types of supports received or needed when people are in the AMC or held in the ACT Court cells. This was a great opportunity the Network took to engage with consumers outside of the Network.

These submissions are currently available via our website (<https://actmhcn.org.au/submissions/>).



Consumer Representation update

Through the Network's Consumer Representative Program and Policy consultations, we continue to provide valuable consumer input and perspectives in a range of committees and other initiatives.

The Network was recently approached to provide Consumer Representatives for three new committee's.

Thi Nha Tran has been appointed to both the Eating Disorder Residential Treatment Centre (EDRT) Project Control Group and EDRT Clinical Working Group. Having Thi Nha on both committees, now completed, ensured that consumer input was relayed between the two groups who collaborate together.



The Health Infrastructure unit at NSW Health requested a Consumer Representative to participate in the review of Health Planning Unit (HPU) 134 Adult Acute Mental Health Inpatient Unit, Mental Health and Mental Health Standard Components. Patricia Green was the successful Representative appointed to this committee. Working with the Australasian Health Facility Guidelines team and design consultants, the committee will update the Health Planning Unit guidelines and standard components for future planning, design and construction of Adult Acute Mental Health Inpatient Units across Australia and New Zealand.

2023 Grace Groom Memorial Oration

The Network was able to offer two volunteers an opportunity to attend the Mental Health Australia 2023 Grace Groom Memorial Oration. Patricia Green and Fay Holden were the lucky volunteers who joined Jen and Eva from the Network and Paul Thompson, Network Chair and Consumer Representative on the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, seen in the picture on the right with MHA staff and guests.

The Oration was held following the Mental Health Australia AGM at the National Portrait Gallery on Tuesday 28 November 2023 and was well attended both in person and online via Zoom for people unable to attend in person.



This year the special guest speaker is 2023 Australian of the Year, Taryn Brumfitt.

Taryn is the founder of the Body Image Movement, director of the inspiring documentaries EMBRACE and EMBRACE KIDS, and author of four books. Her global crusade to help people embrace their bodies has seen her recognised by UN Women, Amy Poehler's Smart Girls and the Geena Davis Institute. Taryn has delivered more than 100 keynote addresses, and her talk at Google HQ in Silicon Valley was live-streamed to every Google office in the world.



2023 Special and Annual General Meetings

The Network held our Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 21 November 2023, which saw a great turn out of members attending both online and in-person. It was really great to see a mix of old and new members in attendance.

Prior to the AGM, a Special General Meeting was held to tie up some overlooked clauses in our Constitution around membership applications that weren't addressed at the 2021 SGM. The two minor changes to Clauses 5.1.4 'has lodged an application for primary membership' and 5.3.3 'have been accepted for associate membership by the Board', were both endorsed. We would like to point out to Primary members that these corrections do not affect your membership. If you have any concerns about your membership, please get in contact with the Network.

Throughout the proceedings, the outgoing Bianca Rossetti received an acknowledgement award for 5 years of service on the Network Board, presented by the Deputy Chair, Lachlan Atyeo (seen right).



To the Members who were present, we acknowledge that there was some discord regarding the Chair's report which created a lot of tension and/or upset. While Network staff followed up with attendees afterwards, if there are any further concerns please direct them to the Chair, Paul Thompson, by email to chair@actmhc.org.au or contact the Network and ask for your details to be provided to Paul to contact you.

Introducing the 2023-24 Network Board

Also held at the 2023 AGM were the Network Board elections. The elections saw a roughly even split of returning and new Board members elected, which is a great result for both continuity and bringing fresh ideas.

The new Board for 2023-24 is as follows:

Executive Committee

- Chair: Paul Thompson (elected)
- Deputy Chair: Lachlan Atyeo (continuing)
- Secretary: Kathryn Dwan (elected)
- Treasurer: Maree Pavlouis (continuing)

Ordinary Members:

- Jenny Adams (continuing)
- Assunta Arioli (elected)
- Bridget Berry (continuing)
- Zac Chu (elected)
- Chris Corcoran (continuing)
- Babette Fahey (elected, since withdrawn)
- Lucas Spensberger (continuing)

The Network thanks outgoing Board members Bianca Rossetti, Phil Green, Rose Beard and Thi Nha Tran for the contributions they made in the Networks governance.

Introduction from the Chair

Hi, my name is Paul Thompson and I have a lived experience with a mental health condition for at least the past 30 years.

My first career for 23 years was in International Banking, where I learnt about Risk Management, however I was retrenched some 12 months after relocating to Canberra. This experience started my journey with counselling, and it has helped me to better understand myself and to identify and manage the emotional triggers I have.

The good thing was, that I learned to utilise my most challenging experiences to help others, so I went on to assist long term unemployed people to find new careers and give the skills and hope to move on and lead productive lives.

I then went on to develop several careers in social work, assisting those adversely impacted by the criminal justice system, poverty, and homelessness.

I currently sit on some 5 committees as a consumer representative and find it rewarding to contribute to systemic advocacy in the mental health sector.

I previously served 5 years as Board member including four as Treasurer. In the past year I took 12 months off from the Board due to Constitutional limitations for serving Board members.

I am currently working part time as a Mental Health Support Worker, and I have enrolled in Cert IV Peer Mental Health Work online.

My extensive experience on community committees and my confidence in responding to media enquiries should assist me to carry out my duties as Board Chair.



I want to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor, Bianca Rossetti for her enthusiastic term as Chair of the Board. I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to all the newly elected Board members, who are bringing in a lot of new skills, experiences and diversity.

The Network faces some challenges such as funding limitations but I am very thankful for the sound financial position we are in, and for the contribution of all our dedicated staff and volunteers.

My plan as new Chair is to start by listening to the valuable experience of our staff and volunteer teams and do my best to advocate for mental health consumers in the ACT.

New Small Business Grant for consumers

The Network introduced a new financial assistance scheme for consumers to access as part of our suite of Scholarships that are presented during Mental Health Month.

The newly formed ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Inc. Consumer Small Business Grant Program, provides grant funding of \$5000 to the Grant Recipient for the purpose of assisting them in starting or continuing their small business. This Grant is specifically designated for individuals with mental health issues.

The recipient of the inaugural grant is Liam Adams.

Readers may recall from the Spring 2022 newsletter that Liam is a young man who lives with autism and intellectual disability, who runs his own business Everyone Needs a Liam. This business is Liam's idea to help people feel good about themselves and to promote people with disabilities as real assets in the world. The name came from friends who heard about all the nice things Liam would say and do, and they would exclaim "Everyone Needs a Liam!"



Liam writes prolifically and launched his first novel, Papers through the Hollows, along with his business in September 2022. Liam's novels are not published officially because his disability affects his writing, but instead they are edited by his mum and printed locally.

Liam was presented this Grant by Deigh (Network CEO), at the launch of his third novel, System of Trees, on Saturday 21 October at the Book Cow in Kingston (seen right reading to attendees).

As part of the Grant, Liam will be guided in the development of his business by an external mentor.

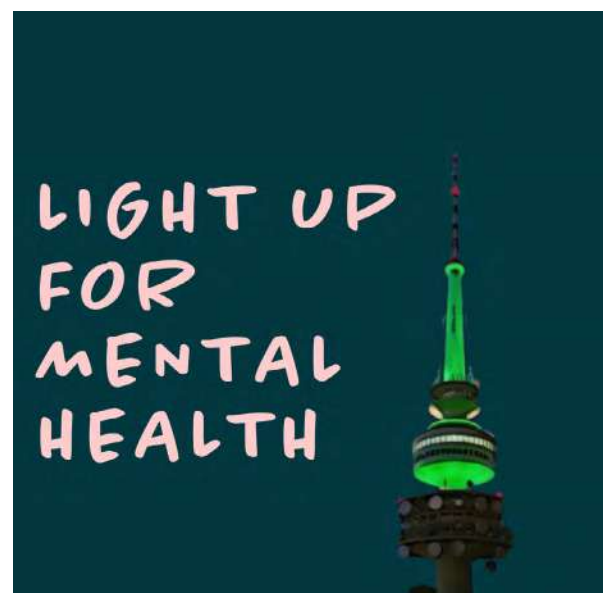
The Network extends our congratulations to Liam and look forward to seeing his business grow.



A beacon for mental health

An iconic Canberra landmark was lit up for mental health this year to raise awareness about mental health.

Telstra Tower was lit up green on October 10 to mark Mental Health Day and continue to raise awareness about mental health. Green is the international of mental health awareness. This is the first occasion a major local landmark has been used during Mental Health Month.



Mental Health Month Awards

On 1 November, the 2023 Mental Health Month Awards Night were held at Verity Lane Market.

The Mental Health Month Awards recognise the many exceptional people, organisations and their initiatives working to promote and improve mental health understanding, awareness, service provision and wellbeing in the Canberra community.

Dalane Drexler (Network CEO) presented the recipients for the awards and scholarships provided by the Network, which were handed out by Emma Davidson MLA and Melanie Greenhalgh from Collective Wisdom.

The award winners are:

Rufus Scholarship: Jeremy Michael



Lived Experience Ally Recognition Award (Individual): Neena Matthee



Consumer Small Business Grant: Liam Adams 'Everyone Needs A Liam'



ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Consumer Scholarship: Paul Thompson



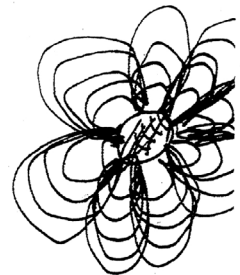
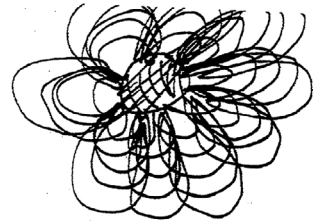
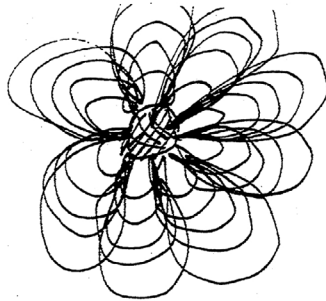
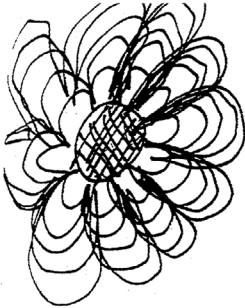
Other award winners not pictured are:

- David Perrin Award: Felicity Maher;
- Lived Experience Ally Recognition Award (Group): Rebus Theatre;
- ACT Mental Health Consumer Network Consumer Scholarship: John Welsby; and
- Leadership through Lived Experience Award (Consumer): Jane Grace

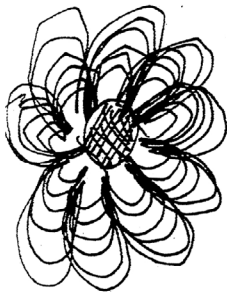
Congratulations to all nominees and receivers of these awards and scholarships.

Fear by Kate Rowland

Kate Rowland is a contributor to our newsletter with her poetry, which we've included in Network News over the years. We are pleased to include one of Kate's newest poems 'Fear' for you to read.



Fear



Fear.
My Dear.

is our Biggest Problem

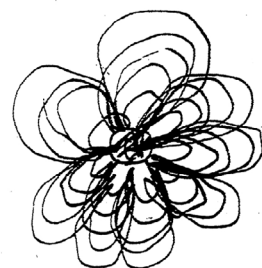
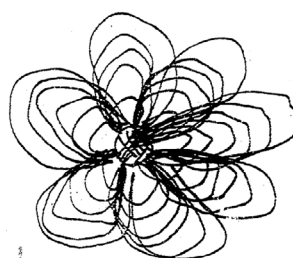
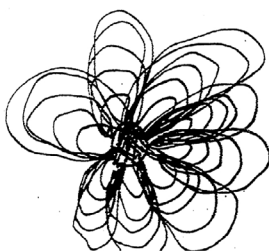
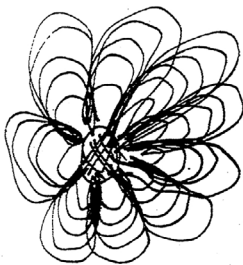
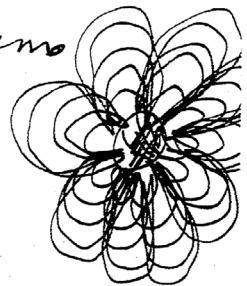
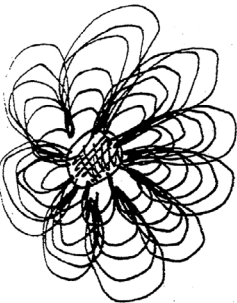
Ahem! Ahem! Ahem!

Far without Fear
of soul put down, a
cruel tear

on a stranger's face.

Oh! Let's love all the
human race

We're all in this together
even under wild
heather!



A Beary Lovely Morning

For Mental Health Month this year, the Network was granted funding to put on two Beary Lovely Mornings!

In previous years, only being able to hold one Beary Lovely Morning meant that some people were missing out, so it was really pleasing for us to be able to offer more opportunities to participate.

Both days were well attended and it was lovely seeing so many new faces attend and people regress to a child-like playfulness.





End of Year Celebrations



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.



Opening hours

Monday to Friday 9am-3pm
(excluding public holidays)



Level 2 Room 11 Griffin Centre
20 Genge Street, Canberra City
GPO Box 836 Canberra ACT 2601



02 6230 5796
actmhcncn@actmhcncn.org.au



actmhcncn.org.au
facebook.com/actmhcncn/
youtube.com/@actmhcncn

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.

Drop-In is held on Thursdays from 10am to 12pm, both online and in person. 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=MVNkaWZlR21wWDMrSjY1MVhkZ2JjQT09>

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@actmhcncn.org.au

Due to the nature of the Network's business, there are times when the Drop-In service unfortunately will be closed, and we try to keep members informed of any closures as early as possible.

APPLICATION FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

NB: Individual membership is **free**.

MEMBERSHIP TYPES AND CRITERIA

Primary Membership

- Has lived experience of mental illness
- Lives and/or accesses services in the ACT

Associate

- 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 FOR:

☐ Primary Membership

☐ Associate Membership

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"/> Mx <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Preferred Pronouns	<input type="checkbox"/> He/Him <input type="checkbox"/> She/Her <input type="checkbox"/> They/Them <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....
First Name:	
Surname:	
Address:	
Postal Address: (if different)	
Email:	
Home Phone:	
Mobile Phone:	
Other contact:	

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 General Meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Postal Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Email
	<i>Please note we are required by law to provide all members with notice and other documentation about General Meetings.</i>		

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"/> Woman <input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Please contact me about... (Primary Members Only)
<input type="checkbox"/> Free training events <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions, forums and projects <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer opportunities (with reimbursement of costs) <input type="checkbox"/> Helping with events

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