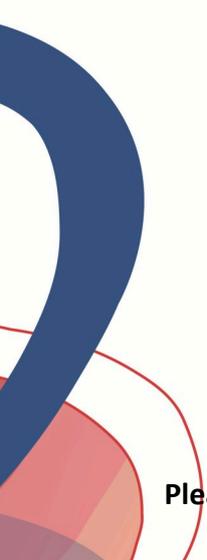


Week 2: Introduction to Consumer Representation





Introduction to Consumer Representation

Objective:

To have an introduction to the Consumer Movement and how it links into Recovery. To learn about systemic advocacy and consumer representation in the ACT.

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References and Further Reading:

National framework for recovery-oriented mental health services—Guide and resources: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/a-national-framework-for-recovery-oriented-mental-health-services-guide-for-practitioners-and-providers>

Mary O'Hagan 1 workshop Psykiatritopmøde 2012: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvhHKEw40xM>

Self Labelling and Identity: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxbw7dDMX60>

Recovery: <http://www.recoverystories.info/what-does-a-person-need-in-their-environment-in-order-to-recover-by-mark-ragins/>

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum: nmhccf.org.au

What is the aim of Consumer Representation?

- Improve the quality of service delivery, through consumer involvement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of services.
- Increase the satisfaction of consumers using mental health and other services.
- Change community and service attitudes towards people affected by mental illness.
- Create more equity in the relationships between mental health services and consumers.
- To voice consumer perspectives, and take part in the decision-making process, on behalf of other consumers.



Consumer Representation is important because it brings the lived experience to the table.

As a rep you can start identifying where some of the gaps in service are, where things could be done better, and trying to change the mindset of some of the policy makers and decision makers that you'll come into contact with.

Representation Principles

- Representation is about expressing the perspectives of consumers, in a range of situations, such as committees and consultations.
- All consumers have the right to have their views represented, and ought to have opportunities to do so, in a way that is timely and meaningful.

Historically, services and programs that treat, care or assist people with experience of mental health problems (consumers) have been designed by clinicians and administrators. Consumers and their carers have had little opportunity to provide input. Service users have a unique perspective and their 'customer feedback' can create more responsive and higher quality services.

NMHCCF Advocacy Brief—Consumer and Carer Participation – Key Issues and Benefits

- Representation requires communication between representatives and other consumers, so that representatives can legitimately access consumer views, and speak on their behalf.
- If consumers hold a broad range of views, it is important that these are accurately reflected by representatives who are acting on consumers' behalf.
- Consumer representatives have the core responsibility to act ethically in all of their representative duties.

Image courtesy of
stockimages at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

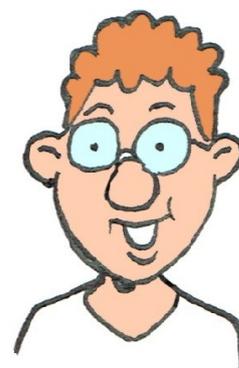
What is the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network?

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.

How the Network came into being was basically a group of people that wanted change.

In **1997** a number of consumers decided to form a Consumer Group after attending a consumer representation workshop sponsored by the Mental Health Foundation. A committee was formed and meetings were held monthly.

The Network lobbied for a 'Clubhouse' model in its earlier days; a consumer space where mental health consumers could access and share resources. With the commencement of The Rainbow, the Network's focus shifted to consumer representation.



In **2005** the Network decided to work toward a broader understanding of representation and adopted principles of **systems advocacy**.

From then onwards the Network worked towards building a sustainable foundation for consumer advocacy in the ACT. **The Consumer Representative Program (CRP)** – the Network's core activity – has continued grow and expand, as have the Network's other activities.

For more information check out:

www.actmhc.org.au/foundation-documents/

www.actmhc.org.au/submissions/

to

Our Aims as an Organisation are:

- To accurately represent the interests of mental health consumers to service providers, community and government at all levels.
- To facilitate meaningful communication between mental health service providers, carers and consumers.
- To increase mental health literacy amongst consumers and service providers through

People with mental health issues have been standing up and saying 'It's time that you listened to us, because we know what's best for us'.

What Do We Do?

We represent consumers, bringing their voices to professionals by:

- Participating on committees.
- Participating in and assisting with research programs.
- Lobbying the government and mental health service providers.
- Facilitating education programs for professionals



The Network's vision as expressed in the current strategic plan :

Vision: A community of connected voices achieving positive change.

Statement of Purpose:

To advocate all means to improve and enhance systems, services and practices for consumers in the ACT by:

- Discovering and promoting the collective voice
- Facilitating and supporting consumer participation at all levels of decision-making
- Ensuring a commitment to consumer-driven recovery.

What would you change about how the mental health system works in the ACT?

Values

- Empowerment
- Respect
- Courage
- Social justice
- Meaningful inclusion

Guiding Principles:

Our guiding principles reflect our values of empowerment, respect, courage, social justice; and meaningful inclusion. They reflect what Board, members and staff expect of each other in their work together and how we work with others in our representative, advocacy and collaborative capacities.

- Value of lived experience
- Open dialogue and advocacy
- Increased self-awareness
- Consumer-driven recovery
- Ensure social justice and human rights are upheld
- Sense of community

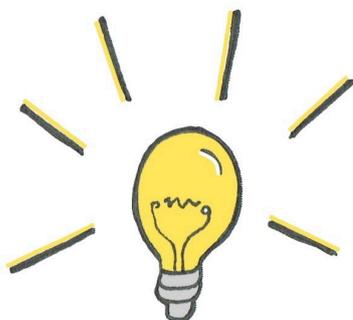
Video Notes: Introduction to Consumer Representation

Watch the video and consider the following:

- Why is the consumer perspective important when developing services?

Take note of any points you find interesting.

You will get to help develop policy that will affect people in the future. You will get to have a say about things that are happening now... you will get to discuss new improvements... if you want to have a say in the ground level, then this is the job for you.



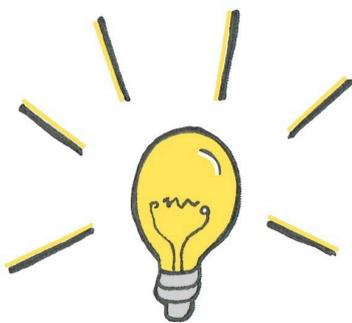
Video: ACTMHCN Consumer Representative Program Training,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elgsgVjc520>

Video Notes: The Network Effect

Watch Terri's story and consider the following:

- Why is it important for consumers to have their story heard?
- How is the consumer perspective different from the traditional clinical perspective? Does that make a difference?

Take note of any points you find interesting



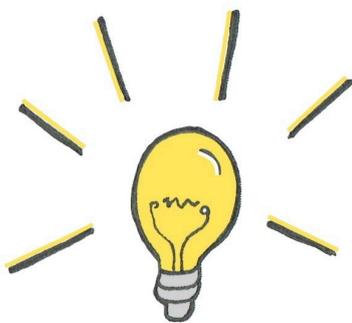
Watch the other stories
from The Network Effect:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMWwEZ3xmJLZ7S4AtyKc5mA3mIuFvWvEA&si=CCUItHXNS40N5zTr>

The Development of the Consumer Movement

Watch the video and take note of any points you find interesting.

This video is about the consumer movement in Canada. How similar/different do you think the situation is in Australia?



For an Australian perspective, see these articles:

Consumer Representative Reflection—Patricia Green

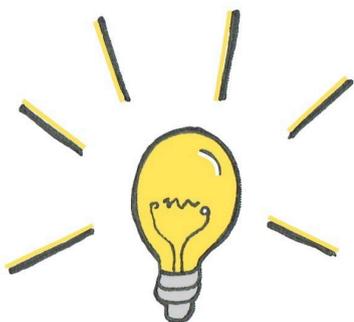
Video: Presenting the consumer/survivor/ex-patient movement
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uTbEBPkAAk&t=3s>

Video Notes: Why Consumer Representation?

Watch the video and consider the following:

- Why is it important to have the consumer perspective when developing services?
- What is the benefit of consumer representation – to the individual? To the system?
- What are some ways that the consumer movement works to make systemic change?

Take note of any points you find interesting



CRP Video “ Why Consumer Representation?”

What people think about Consumer Representation

Change takes forever. And just when I think 'I can't do this anymore', something will happen and change will come in, and I think 'Wow, it was worth it'.

Consumer Representation helps with destigmatisation of mental illness because having someone who's had the lived experience of mental illness positively involved in the development of services I think is an important thing.

I think we actually break down stigma within the system while being on those committees.

What I think:

It's really important to me that I know I am making a difference. And I know that change happens very slowly, especially in mental health, but just knowing that that change does happen, I've seen it happen, and it will continue to happen as a result of my contribution is really, really rewarding for me

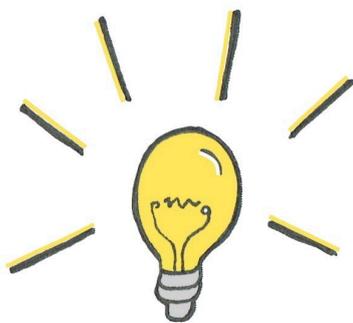
Consumer Representation is not just about advocating for me and my needs, it's about advocating for things that affect lots of different people. And it's important because we can change things that are hurting us, we can change things that aren't happening for us that we need to have happen. And we can have our voice heard as policy happens, as legislation is developed and to make sure that the systems that are around us actually support us.

Video Notes: Recovery and the Consumer Movement

Watch the video and consider:

- What is recovery? Why is it important?
- How does recovery fit in with consumer representation?

Take note of any points you find interesting:



To find out more about the Australian National Framework for Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Service, read the following:
Consumer and Carer and Practitioner Guides to Recovery Principles

Video: What does the recovery model look like today?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2SDbSuX3kQ

National Framework for Recovery Oriented Mental Health Services

The National framework for recovery-oriented mental health services provides guidance to mental health practitioners and services on recovery-oriented practice and service delivery.

It defines personal recovery as 'being able to create and live a meaningful and contributing life in a community of choice, with or without the presence of mental health issues.'



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles
at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

It's development is underpinned by extensive research and consultation, as well as being informed by lived experience.

The guide and the additional resources can be accessed online at the Department of Health website (see references at the start of this module)

Resources with 'reflective questions' provide consumers and carers with a recovery principles approach to ensure that mental health services facilitate their recovery journey.

Recovery-oriented practice encapsulates mental health care that:

- recognises and embraces the possibilities for recovery and wellbeing created by the inherent strength and capacity of all people experiencing mental health issues
- maximises self-determination and self-management of mental health and wellbeing
- assists families to understand the challenges and opportunities arising from their family member's experiences.

Recovery and Consumer Representation

Factors that are involved in the recovery journey:

How does Consumer Representation fit into this picture?



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

HOPE

Self-Belief	Emotional growth, confidence, now internalised stigma
Resourcefulness	Learning, choices, self-management, determination
Relationships	Respectful, strengths based, supportive, reciprocal
Income	Cover basic living needs, housing, transport
Contribution	Work, education, leisure
Transition	Circumstances, places, identity
Treatments	Medication can help or hinder

For more information check out:

Mary O'Hagan's Denmark workshop 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvhHKEw40xM>

Recovery Stories: <https://www.recoverystories.info/category/film/>

Think about what you learned about Consumer Representation in this module.

What did you enjoy the most? Find most useful? Practical?

What are some Consumer issues/areas that are of interest to you?

Something I want to take away from this module:



