



Welcome to the New Year ...

The Consumer Forums & Consumer Action Groups (CAG) have been attended by 9-14 people at a time and have largely been about policies regarding 1) Suspension from MHACA and 2) Criteria for access to MHACA. In February, we had a Community Observer as a guest: Carly Ingels from the Community Visitor Program came to tell us about her program and how they are independent from the hospital and advocate on behalf of people with mental illness. CVP works with all the people that consumers work with, to help achieve outcomes that a consumer may wish for but which may not be happening yet.



Above: Consumers & staff get together over a BBQ lunch every second week at MHACA. Everyone is welcome! See the MHACA calendar for more details.

The Consumer Action Group is held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month @ 12-2pm

The Consumer Forum is held on the 4th Tuesday of each month @ 6.00-8.00pm

Please come along - Everyone is Welcome!

Regarding Carmel ...

You were a friend, a peer and a mentor, a warm heart and a listening ear. You have left MHACA and are no longer our mentor but will always be everything else. We do hope we see you again.

Darwin or Bust!

A longer consumer holiday is being trialled and is going to be held on 4-10 June. Bookings are now full and a total of nine consumers and three staff are going. Stay tuned.

Singing Group ...

The Singing Group is going to be recording a CD which has a central desert theme, as well as the two original songs written by the group. Keep your ears out for progress. The group have decided to call themselves the MHACA Quavers—because we shake the house with our melodies and harmonies and also because we ourselves sometimes shake (and of course because a quaver is a musical note).

Invitation ...

An invitation to everyone to come and enjoy BBQ lunches, now on every second Friday. This is an opportunity to get to know MHACA and the people that walk through our door. Bring a gold coin donation. ✂

Training

Training is going to be offered to consumers for new policy procedures. Policy topics include:

- harassment & discrimination
- children accessing MHACA
- conduct & behaviour at MHACA
- infectious diseases & quality/health control

Consumer Run Drop-In Centre

On 24-25 February when staff had two days of strategic planning, five consumers were asked to run the Drop-In Centre, as staff would be absent (and we do like to have our drop-in centre open every day). It went well and was great to be in the company of peers, and was a privilege for us all to be given the responsibility of looking after the building. We really appreciated it and there was a good turn out as usual. **A big thank you to Rocky, John M, Darren and Lisa for being such great peer support advocates & working the MHACA Drop-In Centre.**



Left: Lynne, Kate, Jo, Sandy and Gwynnith from the MHACA Singing Group, accompanied by David Roennfeldt, were invited to sing at the opening of the MHACA launch on Wednesday, 10 December 2008



Consumer Forum Position -

General

Name: Paul Birchall

What are your aims in this position?

To help people get on their feet and be there for them if they want someone to listen to them. I am always open as much as possible and am a friendly, shy person but always a good listener. It is good to meet different people and it is very rewarding for both parties.

What consumer driven action do you want to promote?

To promote and get involved and help with homelessness and suicide prevention. That is because it is better assistance to people when you have a lived experience and I have the background and know how it is.

What does MHACA mean to you?

It is a place to be honest and open and a place you can get help. People are there to help and listen, it's a safe zone. In the long run when you get to know the place it is like a family and everyone knows everyone and what moods they are in. I used to work with MHACA before and it is rewarding to see some of the same clients. It is give and take here.

What skills & personal qualities do you have?

I am very honest and sometimes over honest. I am a general down-to-earth person and I look at and accept life from many different angles and I am very accepting of others. I don't judge other people.

Any other comments or insights?

It is a good experience for me working at MHACA and they are a really good team of people to work with. Everyone is always concerned about people. As a consumer forum representative I hope I can fulfil other people's needs and do a good job.



Consumer Forum Position -

D2DL

Reference Group General

Name: Sandi Yandell

What are your aims in this position?

To be someone who people can come to with feedback or concerns regarding the D2DL program. I want to be able to relay that feedback to the program and to help it improve.

What consumer driven action do you want to promote?

I want to see consumers making good use of the facilities we've got. I would like them to take responsibility for following guidelines and the code of conduct and for ensuring that their actions aren't being detrimental. It is not necessarily the staff's responsibility and I would like to see us do it for ourselves. I'd like to see a wider range of consumers willing to participate in the Consumer Forum.

What does MHACA mean to you?

MHACA means to me a safe place where I can go and participate in things which will help my recovery to get back on my feet again. It is also a place where I've been provided with a lot of opportunities that I wouldn't have got anywhere else. I love the friendly and comfortable atmosphere. MHACA has helped me make a lot of new good friends.

What skills & personal qualities do you have?

I am friendly and approachable. I've got a lot of integrity I think and am willing to step out of my comfort zone in order to help others.

Any other comments or insights?

To all you consumers out there—come and see me! Come and have a chat!!