



inBalance

Mental Health Association of Central Australia Inc
Quarterly Newsletter: September-November 2003

Welcome!

to the spring edition of our bimonthly newsletter - which has a new look, and a new name. These changes reflect some of the many changes the MHACA office has recently been experiencing . . . At the top of the list we welcome Claudia Manu-Preston as our new manager, who has been with us for just over eight weeks - see page 2 for Claudia's update which will be a regular feature of our newsletter. As we welcomed Claudia we also said goodbye to our Administration Officer, Wendy Bartel, who left us in early July. We wish Wendy well in her future endeavours and thank her for all the great work she did.



MHACA Staff L to R: Laikum, Megan, Diane Lorene, Raymond, CLaudia

MHACA Committee members



Back L-R: Maureen O'Grady, Paul Hills, Peter Price
Front L-R: Christine Pilbrow, Trish Hickey, Wayne Wills



It's that time of year again!

The MHACA AGM
will be held at 6.30pm on
Wed. 24 September 2003,
at 11 Stuart Tce.

All members, consumers, carers
and interested members of the public
are welcome to attend.

A light supper
will be provided.

"Life is not measured by the breaths that we take, but by the moments that take our breath away." - Anon

inBalance is the quarterly newsletter of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia
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Manager: Claudia Manu-Preston
Bookkeeper: Lorene Schindler
Reception/bookkeeping trainee:
Kathryn Buzzacott
Services Branch Manger:
Megan Rackley
Pathways Program Officer:
Lai Khum Law
Life Promotions Coordinator:
Dianne Linton
Life Promotions Officer:
Raymond Campbell

Committee

Chairperson: Trish Hickey
Deputy Chairperson: Jan Campbell
Secretary: Maureen O'Grady
Treasurer: Paul Hills
Public Officer: Jenny Hartung
Org. Rep: Patti Farley ARAFM
Org. Rep: Christine Pilbrow,
Salvation Army
Consumer Rep: Wayne Wills
Consumer Rep: Peter Price

Committee meetings

Are held on the 2nd Monday of each month. If you have any issues you would like to place on the agenda please contact Kathryn or your favourite committee member at least a week prior to each meeting.

Correspondence with Editor

Contact Rita Riedel c/- 8952 3311

Contributions are Welcome

Contributions to inBalance are welcome. Whether it is a meeting date for the mental health calendar, a review of a mental health book or program, information about mental health issues or a consumer or carer perspective on an issue, we look forward to receiving your information. The deadline for the next issue is 20 November 2003. Circulation is approx. 175 individuals and groups.

Disclaimer

Contributions to inBalance do not necessarily reflect the views of MHACA.

Manager's Update

HELLO! and welcome to our new-look newsletter, **inBalance**.

My name is Claudia Manu-Preston and I have recently joined MHACA as the Organisation and Community Development Manager. I have lived in Alice Springs for the past 17 years and have worked in the areas of Education and Training, Children's Services, Disability and Aged Care. More recently I have worked on the Mental Health Review Tribunal and as a member of the NT Community Advisory Group on Mental Health. Outside of work I enjoy gardening, listening to music and getting together with family and friends. I also have two beautiful children who keep my husband and I on our toes!

Since starting as the new MHACA Manager I've been busy familiarising myself with my role. I've been doing a lot of promotional work which has included meeting with consumers, carers and service providers both locally and in Darwin.

It's been good to share ideas and information - from talking with consumers and carers it's clear there's still a lot of work needed to improve outcomes for consumers. At a consumer meeting recently it was said, "there are millions of dollars being spent on services but not much is happening on the ground." While this may be a simplified comment about what's not happening in the mental health sector I believe it is



Claudia Manu-Preston: Manager

a good indication of how a lot of consumers and carers feel.

Our challenge at MHACA - as with other service providers - is to provide services that match the needs of our community - to make operational in our region the principles of the National Mental Health Strategy, and to remain responsive to the needs of the stakeholders.

Service Development

One of our priorities is providing a transparent service to members and the public. What does this mean? It means we want you to be fully informed about what you can expect from us as a service: what we do, how we do it, and how we know we have done it.

To improve our services staff have been working on streamlining operations. Our new-look newsletter is one of the ways in which we will be keeping you up-to-date on what each area has been doing.

Staffing Update

The Administration position has been divided into three part-time positions: Reception/bookkeeping Trainee, Bookkeeper and Desktop Publisher. Welcome to Kathryn Buzzacott, Lorene Schindler and

Central Australia Mental Health Week • 5-11 October



Claudia, mental health mascot 'Champ' and Sarah

'Promoting and Protecting the Mental Health of all Children and Adolescents'

MHACA is taking a leading role in coordinating activities for Mental Health Week. A steering committee has been formed to direct and oversee the planning of events for the week which include:

- **Community Forum on Depression (Beyond Blue)**
– facilitated by Lifeline
- **Postcard/calendar Competition in Schools**
– facilitated by Anglicare
- **Mental Health Awareness in Schools**
– facilitated by Central Australian Mental Health Service and the Young Territorian of the Year

- **Remote Forum for Indigenous Young People**
– facilitated by Waltja
- **Media Strategy**
– facilitated by MHACA

Other possible events include:

- **Raising Mental Health Awareness with Yamba (Imparja)**
- **Fun Run/Walk**

World Mental Health Day

Friday, 10 October 2003

Are You Interested?

Anyone interested in contributing ideas or helping with activities please notify Claudia at MHACA on 8952 3311.

Rita Riedel who have taken on these roles in the MHACA team.

* * * * *

When I applied for the position of Manager one of the questions I was asked in my interview was, 'What do you do to take care of your own mental health?' I thought this was a great question and reminder, as mental wellbeing is everyone's business and everyone's challenge. I challenge you... to be good to yourself.

I am excited about the future developments for the Association, and I look forward to working together to improve mental health wellbeing in our community.

Kind regards,
Claudia

Mental Health Awareness Training a Great Success ...

We recently completed our first Mental Health Awareness Training which was a great success. A pilot training session for Training Solutions (part of Centralian College) the program offered a broad range of practical information and advice. A joint project between the Central Australian Mental Health Service, MHACA and consumer representatives positive outcomes for participants included:

- a greater understanding of the myths and attitudes surrounding mental illness in the Alice Springs community
- current/correct information on the incidence of mental illness, types of mental illness and treatments currently available
- an opportunity to talk to consumers involved with MHACA
- developing an understanding of the process for recognising and reporting mental disorders
- discussing the process to use in a crisis situation
- an understanding of support agencies available in Central Australia

A particular success was the talks that consumers gave about the stigma of mental health and how it has affected their lives. We look forward to running more of these training sessions and will keep you posted about future session dates and times.

Choices

People whose lives are affected by mental health issues may have fewer life choices and less opportunities. The Pathways Program provides:

- Ongoing support to set and achieve personal goals
- Social skills training
- Help to access other services
- Opportunities to participate in a variety of social and recreational activities
- Assistance to education
- Help to engage in voluntary work / other types of employment
- Information on a variety of topics
- Resource materials on mental health issues
- A cuppa and a place to chat with others who understand

What Can You Do?

- Come and visit us with or without a referral
- Make an appointment with our Program Coordinator or Rehabilitation Worker
- Explore your choices and personal goals
- Design your own Individual Plan

Feedback From Consumers

"This program has helped me attend a computer course."

"I tried for three months to get a work placement – there was lots of talk. With the Pathways Program I was out doing voluntary work within a couple of hours."

For further info call:

Megan Rackley or Lai Khum Law at MHACA on 8952 3311 between 8.30am – 4.30pm Monday – Friday.

The Pathways Program

Recovery-based Rehabilitation Program

Pathways Coordinator: Megan Rackley; Pathways Officer: Lai Khum Law



The end of June saw the completion of the program's annual report. We looked at the program statistics from commencement in 2001 until now. The program has assisted thirty-five individuals since its beginning. We were very happy to see that 84% of the program's clients have engaged in educational or employment-based placements. Seven people have achieved paid work in the open employment market, four full-time and three part-time. Another has achieved the publication of a book which is a huge effort. Congratulations to all!

Women's Group and Men's Group

The program has been very busy over the past few months with 20 people currently on the books - there are 8 women and 12 men. The Women's Group is held every Friday between 1-2pm and everyone is welcome:

- Next Women's Group is Friday 12 September at MHACA

The Men's Group has been well supported recently with up to 11 men attending each fortnight. It is run in partnership with Relationships Australia and is facilitated by Ken or Justin. The men enjoy a light lunch while they talk, so if you are free on a Wednesday between 1- 2 pm why not come along.

- Next Men's Group is Wednesday 17 September at MHACA

Housing Project

Perhaps the most exciting news is that our housing project, which many of you provided input into, has been approved by the government. The project's aim was to provide housing for people with mental illness which is appropriate, safe, affordable, has security of tenure and is linked with support to enable the tenants to live as independently as possible. We are currently establishing a steering committee to oversee the implementation of the project. Very exciting!

Many of you will have noticed Lai-Khum's absence from the program. She has been in Adelaide supporting her husband through surgery, happily he is recovering well and Lai-Khum will be back at work soon.

Our suggestion box is located in the kitchen and we welcome all feedback, good or bad, so don't be shy. That's our lot.

Megan Rackley
Pathways Program Coordinator

Life Promotion Program

Staying Strong Physically, Emotionally, Spiritually and Culturally

Life Promotions Coordinator: Dianne Linton; Life Promotions Officer: Raymond Campbell

Update ● Update ● Update

Both Raymond and I have been busy negotiating and following up with remote communities to deliver training and education. A lot of the work being done in remote communities for the past six months has been working with workers to support young people. Activities have included attending expos, displaying resources, group work with young people and running Suicide Talk and Suicide Aware workshops.

Men's Health Expo

Raymond has been involved in men's health issues throughout Central Australia and has attended many workshops and meetings about men's health.

Raymond is interested in taking four men out to Maryvale (Titjikala) for a Men's Health Expo on Wednesday 8 October. If anyone is interested in going along please call him on 8952 3311 or come in and see him at the MHACA office.

"Ninti Pulka" Program

We have negotiated a partnership with the Waltja "Ninti Pulka" program and are keen to get this program underway to offer an improved service to remote communities. We will keep you updated on the progress of this program.

The Life Promotion Team have been negotiating training for improving the team's skills. We are currently doing our Certificate IV in workplace training and assessment, and will be receiving training in October on Suicide Assessment.

Applied Suicide Skills Training

There are two ASIST courses being offered this year. The first one is on 17-18 September. For more information contact Christine Palmer or Stephen Meredith at Congress SEWB on 8953 8988 or Dianne at MHACA on 8952 3311.

The second workshop will be in November with dates still to be confirmed.

Bereavement Support Group

We are interested in forming a bereavement support group for people affected by suicide or loss of a loved one by suicide. If anyone is interested or has any ideas for the group please phone or visit Raymond or Dianne at MHACA.

Dianne Linton
Life Promotion's Coordinator

Mission Statement

Promote the physical, spiritual, emotional and socio-cultural wellbeing of individuals, families and communities through community owned and developed initiatives as a means to reduce suicide and self-harm.

Purpose

To establish, coordinate and consolidate a comprehensive life promotion service and community network as an essential infrastructure to prevent and reduce suicide and its adverse consequences on individuals, families and communities.

The Life Promotion program provides an integrated approach to suicide prevention, intervention and post-vention through collaborative partnerships and community education.

Goals

- Health promotion
- Harm prevention strategies
- Early intervention and prevention
- Management and treatment of suicidal behaviour
- Community development, education and training
- Sharing of information
- Post-vention strategies

For further info call:

Dianne Linton or Raymond Campbell at MHACA on 8952 3311 between 8.30am



Kathryn Buzzacott at Reception



Life Promotion Officer Raymond Campbell

Friendly faces at MHACA



Rehab Officer Lai Khum Law



Bookkeeper Karen Wilton



Visitor from time to time, Kurt



Life Promotion Coordinator Dianne Linton



MHACA Housing Subcommittee

MHACA and NTCAG

Northern Territory Community Advisory Group on Mental Health

Let Your Voice Be Heard!

This is your opportunity to support Territorians with mental health problems. MHACA holds a position on NTCAG, and we are seeking nominations from consumers to be included on our NTCAG Register for future representation of the Association.

If you would like to represent MHACA on NTCAG

or for further information
please contact Claudia
on 8952 3311

What is NTCAG?

The Northern Territory Community Advisory Group on Mental Health (NTCAG) was established in 1992 in accordance with the First National Mental Health Plan and works in accordance with the National Mental Health Strategy.

Volunteer consumers and carers

NTCAG is made up of volunteer consumers and carers who provide input into mental health policy decision making processes. This is particularly in relation to the implementation of the National Mental Health Plans and in accordance with the Mental Health Statement of Rights and Responsibilities endorsed by Health Ministers in March 1991.

The Group assists the NT Health and Community Services Minister in the formulation of:

- mental health policies
- plans
- associated legislation
- other matters related to mental health

The overall aim of the Group is to assist the Department of Health and Community Services to best meet the needs and requirements of people with mental health

problems or mental disorders, and their carers.

If you would like further information contact Burniece Cross on 8999 2717.

NTCAG Representation

NTCAG is represented by its members on several different committees, which include:

- National Consumer and Carer Forum
- Approved Procedures and Quality Assurance Committee
- Mental Health/Police Steering Committee
- Primary Mental Health Care Intersectoral Reference Group
- Auseinet Consumer and Carer Consultative Committee

NTCAG Update

The last meeting was held on Saturday 9th August in Darwin. Members discussed general operational matters, NTCAG's

(cont. pg 15)

Make Every Day a Stress Less Day!

"Excessive stress levels can be risky. Take steps to reduce your stress levels for the sake of good mental health."

Promotional postcards produced for Mental Health Week 2003 by the Mental Health Association of NSW and Teamhealth. For further information on mental health and wellbeing call 1300 780 08 (NT)



Carer's Corner

Are You Eligible for Carer Allowance and/ or Carer Payment?

If you are caring for a person 16 years or over:

Carer Allowance

Is an allowance, separate from Carer Payment, for people who:

- personally care for a person who experiences a substantial functional impairment as a result of his/her disability
- live in the home of the person being cared for;
- assist with treatment if the person is in hospital

It can be paid for up to two adults in care; is not income and assets tested; and can be paid in addition to Carer Payment.

Carer Payment

Is an income support payment you can get if you are personally provide full-time care:

- For a person with a severe disability or medical condition;
- On a daily basis;
- In a person's home or in hospital.

It can be claimed for one adult, or for the combined care needs of an adult and that adult's child. It is income and assets tested, both for the carer and the person being cared for.

More Information

For more information about Carer Allowance and Carer Payment, and more detailed information about eligibility call Centrelink on:

13 27 17

ARAFMI

Association of Relatives and Friends
of the Mentally Ill

Carer's Morning Tea 1st Tuesday of each month

at Royal Flying Doctors Cafe,
Stuart Tce, Alice Springs

Contact Olga Radke (08) 8955 0158
Fax: (08) 8942 2711 Email: ntarafmi@octa4.net.au

NT Carers Meeting

3rd Thursday of every month
5.30-7.30pm

At NT Carers we recognise that every carer and their situation is unique, and should be treated as such. We will work together with each carer to offer a range of services that specifically cater to them and their situation. Support is offered through referral to the Carer Respite Centre (right next door) and other appropriate services, counselling, support groups, advocacy, information, education and training.

For more info contact Sharon Kerber on
(08) 8953 1669, PO Box 4929 Alice Springs 0871

"Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

Michael Jordan, Professional Basketball Player

Cleaner Wanted

MHACA is looking for a new cleaner. This job is for 2 hours per week. Experience is not necessary.

If you are interested please phone the MHACA office on 8952 3311 for a job description and salary details.

NT Mental Health Coalition

Update *by Geoff Harris*

Input to the NT Budget process was discussed at the most recent meeting of the NT Mental Health Coalition in Darwin on 18 August 2003.

The NT Government budget announcement for 2003-04 of approximately \$900,000 increase in NT mental health money was off-set by the reduction in Commonwealth Reform and Incentive money. The net increase for the NT Mental Health budget was of the order of \$180,000. This increase is less than CPI! The really good news in the budget announcement was an increase in funding over the next three years of \$7.2million.

Priorities for this increased funding were agreed in terms of the need for more service options and choices for consumers. Given the lack of improvement in quality of government-provided services (despite continued efforts of consumers, carers and other mental health advocates) the Coalition believes that the best way to achieve an increase in quality service options is through funding the non-government sector.

One key area where this new money would be well spent is to fund alternatives to hospitalisation for people who are becoming unwell. This would assist people who are becoming unwell but do not necessarily require the trauma (or expense) of the hospital experience. Currently these people either get better by themselves or must become so unwell that hospitalisation becomes necessary.

The NT Mental Health Coalition submission to the draft mental health strategy review identified many issues to address including the need to fund a range of other services to meet the needs of people with mental illness. The priorities for inclusion in the NT-COSS budget submission have been identified by the NT Mental Health Coalition as:

1. Funding for community-based care options which bridge some or all of the gaps between acute care and home
2. Funding for the provision of a range of suitable supported accommodation options for people with mental illnesses
3. Increasing the proportion of mental health funding to the NGO Sector - from 5 % of total NT mental health funding to 10%. Priority geographical areas for new funding were seen as being Palmerston, regional Darwin and all other regions. New funding should include: accommodation options, consumer and carer support, quality of life activities, community based rehabilitation, and funding targeted at flexible and appropriate service response for special needs/ population groups eg young people, Indigenous, NESB, dual diagnosis etc
4. Indigenous mental health - need for more resources to service Indigenous people with mental health issues in regional and remote communities. (This priority recommendation is to be followed up with AMSANT.)
5. The need to improve the quality of government-run treatment services, including the development of flexible service response. This to be done primarily through existing resources, with minimal additional resources.

The mental health strategic review has been released and was discussed. Whilst there are some improvements over the previous draft, the document does not really constitute a clear direction for

mental health services in the NT. As the Coalition has previously advocated, there remains a need for a coherent five-year mental health plan for the Territory (which encompasses the views of consumers and carers and other key stakeholders) to set a clear and competent agenda for us all to pursue into the future.

One clear risk of this lack of clarity is that any amount of budget increases could be sucked up into providing expensive hospital-based and/or other government-provided general services. This approach would not go very far towards meeting consumer and carer requests for a greater range and choice of services to improve quality of life for consumers. It was agreed that the Coalition would put together a response based on previous submissions.

If you would like to have input regarding any Territory-wide issues or specific comments regarding the NT mental health services strategic plan please contact Claudia at MHACA on 8952 3311.

Mental Health Service System Development Strategy Report available

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services has recently released a final report for its Mental Health Service System Development Strategy. If you would like a copy of the report it is available on the Dept of Health and Community Services Mental Health website at www.health.nt.gov.au or you can borrow a copy from the MHACA office.

Suicide Information on the Web

Suicide Prevention Australia

www.suicidepreventionaust.org

Suicide Prevention Australia is a non-profit, non-government organization working as a public health advocate in suicide prevention. SPA is a broad-based organization, which brings together diverse community interests across disciplines, youth and mental health sectors and the public affected by suicide.

Mind-frame Media

www.mindframe-media.info

Based on the print resource Reporting Suicide and Mental Illness, this website provides practical advice and information to support the work of media professionals by informing them about responsible and appropriate reporting of suicide and mental illness.

Suicide Prevention

www.mentalhealth.gov.au/sp

There are three sections on this page from the Mental Health Branch of the Federal Department of Health and Aged Care: 1) National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy 2) National Suicide Prevention Strategy – links to LIFE-National Framework 3) Education and Training – links to 'National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy Resource Guide on Education and Training'.

Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health (Auseinet)

<http://auseinet.flinders.edu.au>

The website provides access to a wealth of information for individuals working in a range of contexts, carers and consumers of mental health services. It also provides links and contact details to other services and sites, media information, fact sheets and suicide prevention information.

Here For Life

www.hereforlife.org.au

Here For Life is a not-for-profit public benevolent institution focusing on education, awareness and research aimed at the prevention of youth suicide. The website provides information about suicide prevention, counseling and special events, and welcomes volunteers to be involved in community-based projects, from fundraising to proactive community service projects.

Lifeline: Make the Connection

www.lifeline.org.au

A suicide prevention project from Lifeline Australia with the message that people don't have to face crises surrounding suicide alone – help is available. The website provides information about the Project, about Living Works suicide intervention training, what to do after a suicide – finding support – making sense of it all – putting the pieces together; and linking with supports and services on the Net and in the community.

Reach Out! Helping Prevent Youth Suicide in Australia

www.reachout.asn.au

A website established to promote national healing with a specific brief on youth suicide prevention. Reach Out offers three specialist sites – Chill Out! for young people to get support and have their say; Family and Friends, for support and information about youth suicide prevention and for those affected by youth suicide; and, a Professional Forum where doctors, teachers, youthworkers and counselors can share ideas and get information about the best ways to assist young people.

Australian Institute of Suicide Research and Prevention, Griffith University

www.gu.edu.au/school/psy/aisrap

The Institute promotes, conducts and supports research on suicide prevention in Australia. The site provides information on the role and activities of the Institute and counselling information on preventing youth suicide and suicide in families.

Befrienders International

www.befrienders.org/suicide

An important organization offering depression and suicide support, and information about feeling suicidal or depressed; worried about a suicidal friend; the warning signs of suicide; suicide helplines and an online directory of services by country. Suicide statistics, an online newsletter and further information on depression and self-harm are also provided.

(Information courtesy of Synergy, newsletter of Multicultural Mental Health Australia, no 1 2003)

Disability Advocacy Service Inc.

“Helping
You in
the Right
Direction”



What is DAS?

We are a community-based advocacy service providing information to people with disabilities to help them to obtain their rights. We work with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and support and encourage people with disabilities to advocate for their own rights. We can help you with:

- workers rights
- housing
- medical treatments
- training and education rights
- access and transport rights
- adult guardianship
- complaints about services
- legal and money problems
- freedom of information
- assistance to set up self-help groups
- anything else that has to do with your rights

If you have a problem come and talk to us at DAS:
Shop 1a, 63-65 Railway Terrace
PO Box 8267, Alice Springs NT 0870
Phone: 8953 1422 Fax 8953 0471
Email das@disabilityadvocacyserv.org.au

Crossroads 'Changes Within the Highway Breeze Pattern'



Standing here
I feel my senses reeling,
Of new beginnings and new horizons
Filling my head with dreams solely infinite
That I hold in my hands,
Knowing where I was
Being no longer where I want to be,
As of watching my life
Slipping away each day
And heading into nothing.
But here I am again
At the crossroads
Trying to visualize all my endeavours
And where they may lead me,
To think where I will be at the end of 2015
As who I may yet become,
And the changes I will go through,
Feeling the excitement thrill me within
Of boundless as endless possibilities,
And with no clear vision of beholding these
Or the changes to whom I may yet become
Because I firmly believe I have a lot to give,
As too, it gives me drive and hunger
Aiming my sights upon,
So here I now need a game plan
With clear and definite clarity
To where I go from here,
And all the avenues I am aspiring for.

Leo 'Helsinki' Welin



Review of Health and Community Services Complaints Act

The NT Health and Community Services Complaints Act (1998) is currently being reviewed. The review is being undertaken by a Steering Committee which has responsibility for preparing a report to the NT Minister for Health and Community Services, and aims to have a Review paper to the Minister by December 31st 2003.

Although the official closing date for submissions was 29 August 2003, the Steering Committee is keen to ensure we have strong input from the Non-Government Sector, and has indicated its willingness to accept submissions in any form up to Friday 15 September. A 'Discussion Paper to Seek Input from the Public' is available to assist with this process.

**To obtain further information about how you can have input contact:
Sally Matthews, Senior Policy Officer, Health and Community Services Complaints Commission
ph 08 89 991 924 fax 08 89 515 828**

NATIONAL CARERS CONFERENCE 2003

'Caring Matters – A National Debate'

Rydges Canberra
18-19 September 2003

Invitation to the National Carers Conference

Caring Matters – A National Debate will be a conference to raise national debate on strategic and policy matters that affect the lives of Australia's 2.3 million unpaid and other informal carers.

With the trend away from residential support, the demand for unpaid informal care has grown enormously. This trend is expected to accelerate as the Australian population ages.

I invite you to participate in this event, to come and listen to what the experts and opinion leaders are saying, to make your own contribution to the debate and to network with others who share similar interests in caring.

I look forward to welcoming you to the conference.

Louise Gilmore,
President, Carers Australia

For further information:

Ph: (02) 6285 3000 Email: carers@con-sol.com

or visit the Carers Australia website at:

<http://www.carersaustralia.com.au/carersconference-2003>

**Reconciliation, Reform
and Recovery: Creating a
Future for Psychological
Interventions in Psychosis**
22-25 September 2003

Contact:

**Trauma and Survival
23rd Annual Congress**
25-28 September 2003
Perth

Aust and NZ Assn of Psychiatry,
Psychology and Law
Ph: (03) 9509 7121
Email: info@conorg.com.au

**Essentials, Differentials
and Potentials in Health**
28 Sep – 1 Oct 2003
Brisbane

35th Public Health Assn of Aus-
tralia Annual Conference
Ph: (02) 6285 2373
Email: conference@phaa.net.au

**Controlling Crime:
Risks and Responsibilities**
1-3 October 2003
Sydney

ANZSOC Conference
Ph: (02) 9231 9190
Email:
anzsoc@agd.nsw.gov.au

**Diversity in
Health 2003**
Innovation...
Creativity...
Harmony

27-29 October 2003
Sydney Convention Centre

As part of its theme the 2003 Diversity in Health conference will focus on culture and creativity in health and wellbeing. Major cultural presentations, highlighting the visual and performing arts, will be a feature of the conference program. A key topic of the conference will be the use of creativity and the arts in promoting mental and physical health and engagement with the community.

For more info phone, fax or email
the Conference Secretariat:
Ph: (02) 9280 0577
fax (02) 9280 0533 diversity2003@pharmaevents.com.au

THEMHS
Summer Forum
19-20 February 2004
Bondi Beach, Sydney

The Mental Health Services Con-
ference of Australia and NZ
Ph: (02) 9810 8700
Email: info@themhs.org

THEMHS
Annual Conference 2004
August/September
Gold Coast

The Mental Health Services Con-
ference of Australia and NZ
Ph: (02) 9810 8700
Email: info@themhs.org

MHACA Resource Library ...

Come in and borrow or
simply browse ...

Hot off the Press!

Challenges and Triumphs: A Mosaic of Meanings

Challenges and Triumphs is an inspiring compilation of personal stories from people who have a mental illness or who care for one or more of those people. Produced by Auseinet (The Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health) it is a rich and visually stunning resource. If you would like to borrow a copy contact the MHACA office.

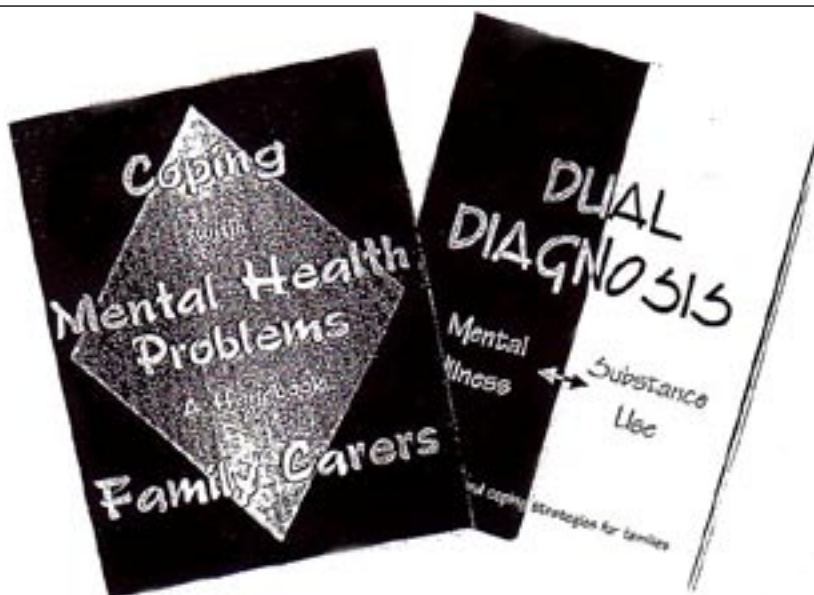
Information for Carers of People with a Mental Illness in the Northern Territory

NYARAFMI has a wonderful booklet available entitled **Information for Carers of People with a Mental Illness in the Northern Territory**. The booklet was produced in response to requests from families, carers and friends of people with a mental illness for simple information explaining services available for treatment and care of people with a mental illness in the Northern Territory. For a free copy contact the MHACA office.



You're Not Alone is a resource that has been developed by SANE Australia for children whose mum or dad have a mental illness. The Guide was co-researched and produced by Dan Halloran, now 15 years old, whose mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was young. In 2002 Virginia died of breast cancer. A wish she and Dan discussed was to produce a book to help families when a parent has a mental illness - explaining to children in simple, cartoon-style what it means, how it is treated, and what people can do to help. **You're Not Alone** is intended for children aged 6-12 years, but can be read by people of any age who would find it useful.

The Guide is available for \$9 (plus P&H) from the SANE Bookshop at www.sane.org. For more info about young people's support groups contact the SANE website or Helpline on 1800 688 382.



Also available, two resources produced by ARAFMI Queensland: **Coping With Mental Health Problems: A Handbook for Family Carers**, and **Dual Diagnosis: Mental Illness and Substance Use**. For further information contact the MHACA office.

SANE StigmaWatch

What is stigma?

Stigma is an attempt to label a group of people as less worthy of respect than others. Stigma against people with a mental illness often involves inaccurate and hurtful representation of them as violent, comical or incompetent – objects of fear and derision.

Why is it important to fight stigma?

People with a mental illness are now treated in the community rather than in institutions. This policy will only work, however, if the community understands what mental illness really means, and accepts those affected as equal members of society. Stigma remains a major barrier to this understanding and acceptance.

Research by SANE shows stigma is a major cause of distress to those affected, their families and friends. It can discourage people from seeking help because they don't want to be perceived as 'crazy'. It also leads to prejudice and discrimination. Stigma, like racism, has no place in a civilised society.

What does StigmaWatch do about it?

The media play a big part in shaping public attitudes, including attitudes towards people with a mental illness. SANE StigmaWatch was established to encourage accurate, respectful depiction of mental illness – exposing cases of media stigma to public scrutiny and educating those responsible to change their practices.

Reports from the public are verified before being posted on the SANE StigmaWatch website at www.sane.org. Those responsible are contacted with an explanation of the harm stigma causes. Responses are then also published on the website. Serious cases are taken further and may involve more wide-reaching media campaigns.

Thanks to SANE StigmaWatch there is an increasing public intolerance of inaccurate and insulting reporting of mental illness in the media. This led to greatly-increased reporting of stigma in the print media during 2002-2003, as well as improved understanding of the harm done by other media such as advertising and television drama.

SANE StigmaWatch is an initiative of SANE Australia, the mental health charity. For more info log onto www.sane.org.

Women's Group

Are you looking for

- exciting actions
- relaxing afternoons
- interesting people to talk to
 - laughter, fun
 - and

Come and join in our Women's Group weekly activities.

When: Every Friday

Time: 1.30pm

**Venue: MHACA
11 Stuart Tce
Alice Springs**

**For more information
contact Megan at MHACA
on 8952 3311**

Out Of Hospital Out of Mind

MHCA has released **Out of Hospital Out of Mind**, a review of more than 1000 sufferers, carers, mental healthcare providers, services, nurses, and psychiatrists. For further info:

www.mhca.com.au

" Learn from other people's mistakes; you don't live long enough to make them all yourself. " -- Anon

(from pg 7)

workplan, future events and the launch of the 3rd National Mental Health Plan. Highlights of the meeting included the following guest-speakers:

Tony Fitzgerald:

Anti-Discrimination Commissioner / Principal Community Visitor

Mr Fitzgerald spoke on the Community Visitor Program (CVP) and its progress throughout the Northern Territory. A new worker, Simon Weise, will commence in October to assist with implementation of the Program and recruitment to the Community Visitor Panels.

A concern raised by some members was that the CVP has primarily been promoted as providing a conciliation service rather than playing the role of watch dog which responds to complaints. Members also expressed a desire for CVP to be promoted more – to make people aware of its existence. Mr Fitzgerald reassured members by responding to their concerns about the operation of this program.

Robert Griew

CEO, Department of Health and Community Services

Mr Griew responded to questions regarding the restructure of the Department, the future role of the NTCAG and Bansemer Report recommendations. He informed the group that the Department has been undergoing substantial change as a result of restructure. He acknowledged that a number of reports have been completed which will impact on mental health, and confirmed that mental health is a priority for Government. Mr Griew emphasised the need for a balance between prevention, early intervention and acute care, and discussed the Bansemer Report recommendation re a Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Division. Although they are separate programs in the new structure there will be strong linkages between the two areas.

Members voiced concerns about NGO's competing with other NGO's for funding rather than working collaboratively. Members were also advised that the Minister is considering the Mental Health Coalition's request for endorsement as the peak mental health body in the Northern Territory.

HAVE YOUR SAY

If you have any issues you would like raised with NTCAG contact Claudia on 89523311.

Next meeting: Wednesday, 8th October 2003

Lifeline's Trash and Treasure

1st Saturday of each month
Christian Community Centre Oval

Sellers: 8.30-9.30am
Buyers: 10am - 2.00pm

Cost: Gold coin donation entry fee.
\$20 for stall space or 2nd-hand car space.

What: Food, drinks, books, plants,
white elephant stall, face-painting,
clothes, car-wash 2nd-hand cars

Yamba and Lifeline's resident clown
'Lulu' will be there.

We urgently need volunteers to help.

**For further information or
to donate towards a GREAT cause
please contact Wendy
on 8952 3766 or 0407 790414**

Contributions

If you would like to include any
news or articles in the next edition of
inBalance please email/send us your
information before 20 Nov. 2003

Online Issue of inBalance

If you are interested in receiving the
next issue of *inBalance* online please
email us at mhaca@octa4.net.au



Mental Health Diary



Date and Time	Meeting Description	Location	Contact
Every Friday 1.30pm	Women's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311
Wed. 17 Sept. 1.00pm	Men's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311
Wed. 24 Sept. 6.30pm	AGM	MHACA office	Claudia 89523311
Wed. 1 Oct. 1.00pm	Men's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311
Thurs. 2 Oct. 1.00pm	Consumer Business Lunch	MHACA office	Claudia 89523311
Sun. 5-11 October	Mental Health Week	Various locations	Claudia 89523311
Mon. 13 Oct. 4.30pm	Committee Meeting	MHACA office	Claudia 89523311
Wed. 15 Oct. 1.00pm	Men's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311
Wed. 29 Oct. 1.00pm	Men's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311
Thurs. 6 Nov. 1.00pm	Consumer Business Lunch	MHACA office	Claudia 89523311
Mon. 10 Nov. 4.30pm	Committee Meeting	MHACA office	Claudia 89523311
Wed. 12 Nov. 1.00pm	Men's Group	MHACA office	Megan 89523311

About MHACA - Building a Better Community

The Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA)

is a non-profit community-based organisation that endeavours to:

- Provide non-clinical support to people who have a mental disability
- Offer psychosocial rehabilitation and continuity of care that is recovery-oriented
- Assist community understanding of mental health issues
- Reduce the stigma attached to mental illness
- Restore human dignity and social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing in all people

Services Offered

MHACA offers three main services:

Pathways Program:

This program helps people whose lives are affected by mental health issues achieve self-directed goals. We have assisted people to pursue a range of activities, including TAFE courses, and volunteer and paid work.

Life Promotion Program:

This program aims to support the central Australian community in Alice Springs and remote areas to prevent suicide. The LPP team have a range of resources to help agencies, individuals and groups learn more about life promotion and suicide prevention.

Advocacy and Participation:

- We host a monthly Consumer Forum and Afternoon Tea where consumers can meet and discuss important issues in mental health.
- We have a small library of information, including Advocacy Kits which can be loaned for free.
- For carers we can put you in touch with a local support network.
- You can become a member of the Association and receive our bimonthly newsletter.
- You may wish to nominate for our voluntary Committee, or you can mail your issue to us for the Committee or Consumer Forum to consider.

For further information please contact the MHACA office on 89523311

MHACA Membership

If you would like to become a member of the Mental Health Association of Central Australia and receive a copy of our quarterly newsletter **inBalance**, please send us your details:

Name: _____

Organisation/Dept (if applicable): _____

Address: _____ Code: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____