

# Carers Book Launch of "Our Journey" @ MHACA - 27 February 2009

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Project facilitator, Amanda Worrell (CAMHS) launching the booklet *Our Journey: As Parents of Sons and Daughters with Schizophrenia*



Mental Health Carers Coordinator, Tracey Hatchard, speaking on behalf of the carers and their involvement in the development of the booklet



Amanda Worrell and Tracey proudly showing the booklet



Above: Claudia MC'ing the launch  
Left: Laurencia and Margot after the launch



Below left: Tracey with CAMHS Ward Manager, Marg McAlavey  
Below right: Some of the 25 guests, including carers and workers, mingling after the launch



## Our Journey

As parents with sons and daughters  
diagnosed with schizophrenia.

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Keeping the family inside  
the shelter

# Our Journey ...

## As Parents With Sons & Daughters Diagnosed With Schizophrenia

*Our Journey is a booklet  
that has been a year  
in the making ...*

*by Amanda Worrall*

### How it began ...

When I started working with a small group of parents a year ago in November 2007, the ongoing emotional challenges that parents face was very apparent. Self blame, feeling a failure, feeling inadequate are feelings that are readily available to parents who have sons and daughters with a diagnosed mental illness. It is common for parents to experience a range of strong emotions—shock, dismay, and sadness, even anger. This is a realm that can be coupled with both pain and frustration, and also tremendous courage and love.

Michael White, the originator of narrative therapy, often spoke about how, 'In times of stress—when we find ourselves under significant duress when facing situations of adversity—we are vulnerable to being separated from our knowledgeableness.' Michael taught me that when working with people who have experienced traumatic situations, therapy can become a context in which the steps that people take, and the knowledge and skills that they represent, can become known and profoundly acknowledged. I tried to follow these principles in my discussions with these parents.

**'By sharing these stories, we are hoping that the things we have learnt over the years will somehow be of benefit to other parents, and to let them know that they are not alone.'**

### Inside knowledge ...

Meeting on a weekly basis with these parents over four weeks, followed by a series of one-to-one interviews, many inspiring and moving experiences emerged through sharing stories. It became very apparent that these parents possessed a wealth of knowledge - 'insider knowledge.' I had no doubt that this information could be really useful to other parents going through similar journeys, and I voiced this.

Although initially surprised at my comment, all the parents were really enthusiastic about putting a booklet together. As one parent commented about the challenges she has faced, 'If I am able to support and assist one parent through sharing these stories, then my life feels more worthwhile.'

Stories about what they have found useful—and what has helped to keep them strong—is the main theme of the booklet: 'By sharing these stories, we are hoping that the things we have learnt over the years will somehow be of benefit to other parents, and to let them know that they are not alone.'

### Messages of hope ...

When I read the finished booklet, I get goose-bumps on my arms. The generosity and openness that these parents have displayed in sharing their stories has been very moving for me. The skills and wisdom contained in their stories is both inspiring and encouraging. These stories share a message of hope, and, as we know, hope is one of the key ingredients to recovery, both for the son/daughter, and for the parents.

Reading these stories may generate some ideas of how others cope, as we all have our own unique ways of coping and managing the challenges we are faced with. As Michael white says: 'None of us are passive recipients to stress and trauma; we all do something to help us survive.'

Compiling this booklet has been such an enjoyable experience. I'm very grateful to the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) and Mental Health carers NT (ARAFMI) for funding this booklet and valuing the voice of parents. ✕

*Amanda Worrall*

*Central Australian Mental Health Services  
(CAMHS) Mental Health Nurse  
Case Manager*

**The booklet is a free publication & is available from CAMHS (8951 7710), MHACA (8950 4600) and the NT Mental Health Carers (8953 1467)**