Mental Health Update March 2011

Suicide prevention

On behalf of staff at the Commission I would like to express our sadness at the spate of recent suicides in the East and West Kimberley regions. In response, I visited Derby and Broome recently with the Executive Manager of the Suicide Prevention Strategy, Melissa Perry, to hold discussions about both an enhanced immediate suicide response and also fast tracking the blueprint of community suicide prevention plans. Minister for Mental Health Hon Helen Morton MLC has also taken a direct interest in the issue and will visit Broome early in March.

The Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention and Centrecare are currently working with 16 communities across the state on the development of Community Action Plans. The Kimberley is a top priority and negotiations are underway with local stakeholders to appoint rural coordinators to help develop these plans. I will keep you updated about progress in future information sheets.

Strengthening the consumer voice

The Mental Health Commission is taking action on its promise to strengthen the consumer voice in all aspects of mental health policy, planning and implementation.

A consumer advisor role will be advertised shortly. Interested people should register with jobs.wa.gov.au and also watch the Government jobs in The West Australian on Saturdays. A carer advisor role is also being developed.

The Commission has now received a final paper from independent consultant Barbara Gatter on the proposed consumer organisation. The final stages of this process include:

- a copy of this final draft report and recommendations is to be posted on the Commission website
- a forum is scheduled for Tuesday 29 March 2011 to provide interested consumers with the opportunity to provide any final feedback. Find details of the forum here.
- immediately after that forum the Commission will proceed to call for submissions from interested organisations in keeping with the recommendations of this final report.

The Commission has accepted Recommendation 12 which proposes one off grants of up to $5000 to incorporated organisations and other consortia of consumers/consumer groups to assist them to engage the expertise they require to prepare their response. Further details about how to access that funding will be available on this website shortly.

Community consultations summary

The Mental Health Community Consultation Summary Report is available on the Commission’s website. The document is a key step in reform. It found there was broad community support for the thrust of the WA Mental Health Towards 2020: Consultation Paper. Importantly it also identified gaps which will be addressed by the Commission in future planning.

The report suggested that reform should create a more coherent and connected system. This would require a cultural change and a rebalancing of the current system, with a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and more comprehensive community based supports. The Mental Health Commission will soon release its strategic policy and plan for long term change.
Legislation update

Work is underway to progress the Mental Health Bill. The Minister has received a summary of the issues and advice prepared by the Expert Group in 2010. Building on that advice, the Commission is moving ahead with the aim to have the legislation introduced into Parliament in 2012.

The quality assurance framework is one area that requires significant reconsideration since the Holman Report was tabled. This includes the roles of the Commission, the Chief Psychiatrist, the Council of Official Visitors and the Mental Health Review Board. An external consultant will be engaged shortly to provide advice to the Minister and the Commission.

The rights of carers also requires further detailed work and the Commission will be meeting with carers on 8 March 2011 to seek their views on some of the options.

Working together to make recovery happen

To encourage organisations to collaborate to bring about recovery for people experiencing mental illness, the WA Association of Mental Health (WAAMH) in partnership with the Mental Health Commission is hosting Western Australia’s second Recovery Symposium

Working Together to Make Recovery Happen on 5 April 2011 will bring together representatives from non-government and public health services, as well as consumers and carers.

‘Recovery focus and the value of relationships’ is a key principle guiding the planning and implementation of reform by the Mental Health Commission. I expect the forum will be a valuable opportunity to share and learn from each other’s experiences.

The symposium will focus on four streams:

- carers and family participation;
- engaging consumers and people with a lived experience in providing services;
- recovery and personalisation;
- collaboration and partnership across the sector.

Detailed information will be available soon or contact WAAMH on 9420 7277 for enquiries.

What difference are we making?

The Mental Health Commission is leading an across government project that will involve consumers, carers, non-government organisations and the public sector in helping to understand how we judge what difference our collective efforts make to the lives of people. It is one of three similar projects that have resulted from the Government’s Economic Audit Committee Report, Putting the Public First.

The non-government organisations that have been nominated to participate are Vincentcare, Richmond Fellowship, WAAMH, Lifeline WA, Perth Home Care, Holyoake and Youth Focus. A similar number of public sector nominees is being sought.

The Commission is seeking up to five consumers and carers to join this group. Further information is attached and available on our web site.

Eddie Bartnik
Commissioner