A greater say for consumers

Consumers will have a strengthened role in policy and planning in mental health.

Expressions of Interest for the Western Australian Association of Mental Health Consumers have closed and the preferred provider will be announced next month. A service agreement will be drawn up which reflects the expectations of consumer groups and the intentions of the Mental Health Commission.

This body will play an important role in making sure that the consumer voice is heard.

At the Mental Health Commission we have employed a Consumer Adviser. Louise Howe starts on 5 September. She will hit the ground running with a group of consumers coming together on Sunday 18 September to discuss how consumer rights might be best reflected in the Mental Health Bill.

Police transportation of mental health patients

The Mental Health Commission is working closely with the WA Police and other stakeholders to make available a range of transport options to cater for individual needs of mental health patients.

Transport of mental health patients involves balancing two components; the need to preserve safety of the individual and the community; and the need to transport mentally ill (and often distressed) people in a sensitive, supportive and respectful manner.

WA Police will continue to transport mental health patients when the risk is extreme or high. Other options are being considered for mental health patients whose security risk is not the primary concern.

The Mental Health Act is currently being reviewed and the issue of which agencies and individuals are authorised to transport people under the Act is included in the review. Changes will be addressed in the Mental Health Bill which will be presented to Parliament in this term of Government.

Ministerial Council on Suicide Prevention

The Minister for Mental Health Hon Helen Morton MLC recently announced new members to the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention. They are chair Mr Peter Fitzpatrick and Deputy Chair Professor Rob Donovan, Curtin University. Jennifer Allen, CEO of Youth Focus, Estelle Dragun, teacher and mother of the late Channel 10 newsreader Charmaine Dragun, Darryl Kickett, Aboriginal health expert and Amanda Wheeler, CEO of Lifeline, have also joined and will bring significant expertise to the Council. For more information visit http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/WACabinetMinistersSearch.aspx?ItemId=142888&minister=Morton&admin=Barnett

The Council is making good progress on Community Action Plans (CAPs) to be rolled out in 50 communities and 50 organisations. The Mental Health Commission, in partnership with the Council, will hold a free forum on suicide prevention on 14 September 2011 and information will be circulated soon.

Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards

Nominations are open for the 2011 Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards. This is an opportunity to recognise individuals and groups in WA who have made a positive contribution to mental health in the past year. I encourage all of you to consider who deserves this accolade and submit a nomination now.
The Awards provide an opportunity to help break down the stigma surrounding mental health. This year the Commission is working to raise the profile of the Awards program and I would like to thank you for your support in displaying the posters and distributing nomination kits. We also have advertisements appearing in The West Australian newspaper (8 August and 12 October). For more information please contact Marsha Dale on 6272 1245 or Marsha.Dale@mentalhealth.wa.gov.au.

Mental Health Week

The Mental Health Commission has funded the WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH) to coordinate statewide activities celebrating Mental Health Week, 9 – 16 October. There will be a range of initiatives that increase understanding and promote help-seeking behaviour among different target groups.

I am pleased that this year the Mental Health Commission is producing a 16 page Mental Health Liftout in The West Australian newspaper. It will appear on Friday 7 October and feature information about keeping mentally healthy, available services and resources, as well as details of Mental Health Week activities. We will also have an extra 10,000 copies available free of charge for organisations that wish to give them to their own stakeholders. For more information please contact Emma Bouveng on 6272 1230 or emma.bouveng@mentalhealth.wa.gov.au.

Workforce Development Strategy and Action Plan

The Mental Health Commission is developing a 12 month Mental Health Workforce Development Strategy and Action Plan. I would like to thank all of you who responded to our Workforce Development Survey about improving the capacity of the mental health workforce. We have received a large number of responses that has provided us with rich and comprehensive information about your views, ideas and hopes for the future. We will post on our website advice about how to access our proposed Workforce Development Plan as soon as it is available.

For more information contact susan.nye@mentalhealth.wa.gov.au

2011 Song of the Year

The Mental Health Commission has sponsored the 2011 Song of the Year Competition run by the WA Music Industry Association (WAM). This includes a special Mentally Healthy Song of the Year category as well as a free song writing workshop for budding singer-songwriters. Some 40 people attended the workshop which was held in conjunction with Catch Music, an inclusive recreation program.

Winners will be announced on October 12 at the Song of the Year Awards Presentation Night. For more information visit: www.wam.asn.au

Eddie Bartnik

Mental Health Commissioner