Mental health update September 2011

Last month marked my first anniversary as Western Australia’s Commissioner for Mental Health. I am currently finalising the Commission’s annual report which will be presented to parliament soon. Both these events caused me to reflect on the significant achievements that the Commission, with your partnership, has achieved. There are a number of ‘firsts’ achieved in our first full year of operation. Importantly, the pace will continue in our second year of operation when we will make progress with a number of key priorities.

Infant mental health scholarships

I am very pleased that the Mental Health Commission has partnered with the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health Incorporated (AAIMHI) to offer almost $400,000 in scholarships for mental health clinicians.

Up to $13,000 is available to each clinician to pay for post graduate university studies or approved training courses and workshops. Some of the funding could support non government organisations to back-fill a clinician’s position with up to $8000.

Priority is being given to people working in non government organisations, rural and remote locations, and those working directly with infants and their families. For more information visit www.aaimhi.org or email aaimhiwascholarships@gmail.com.

Suicide Prevention in Aboriginal Communities: Free public forum

The next of our free public forums will focus on Suicide Prevention in Aboriginal Communities. This is a sensitive and complex topic and we have assembled a range of speakers with diverse expertise and experience. Speakers include Professor Pat Dudgeon from University of Western Australia, a youth representative from Alive and Kicking Goals in the Kimberley, Katherine Hams from Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council and Darryl Kickett from Anglicare. The new Chair of the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, Peter Fitzpatrick, and the Minister for Mental Health, Helen Morton MLC, will also speak.

The forum is on Wednesday 14 September, 1pm to 4pm, Department of Health Theatrette, 189 Royal Street, East Perth. RSVP contactus@mentalhealth.wa.gov.au. We are also offering video conferencing for regional participants.

Media training for mental health consumers and carers

Consumers and carers will have the opportunity to undertake comprehensive media training, as part of a Commission anti stigma initiative. The Commission has funded Sue Crock to conduct a series of four workshops that will help equip people to communicate in the media and help break down the stigma associated with mental illness. The workshops will focus on print, social media, radio and television, and include on camera interview practice. Senior WA journalists will provide insights into the workings of the media. Priority will be given to people who have not had extensive media experience or training. People from diverse backgrounds are invited to apply. Information will be circulated soon and I invite you to nominate or encourage others to do so.
Individualised support and funding for people with a mental illness

The Mental Health Commission has called for tenders from community organisations interested in providing individualised support and funding packages. The Mental Health Commission has allocated $25.18 million over four years to support 100 people and we have invited community organisations to join a panel of providers.

Organisations appointed to the panel may be matched to individuals with mental illness to provide support for them. Each person will receive tailored support that is based upon a personal plan that aims to meet their needs and the personal outcomes that they have identified.

More than 30 organisations attended a briefing about the tender which is the first of its kind in Western Australia. The tender closes on 23 September. For more information please contact Rob Erskine on Rob.Erskine@mentalhealth.wa.gov.au.

Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards

Applications for the Mental Health Good outcomes Awards 2011 have closed and we have a record number of nominations. I know the standard of nominations will again be high, reflecting the dedication to excellence and innovation in our sector. Marsha Dale, the project officer who is organising the Awards, has asked me to give you a sneak peak at one of the new trophies, or 'Mental health Oscars' as she is calling them. We have partnered with DADAA (Disability in the Arts Disadvantage in the Arts). DADAA in Midland promotes social inclusion for consumers by engaging them with art. Denise Bowyer and her team are working with consumers to fashion 8 individual trophies. Each reflects the personality and the journey of its artist. For example, the lucky winner of Category 3 (Dr Mark Rooney Award for Improved Outcomes in Child and youth mental health sponsored by the Commissioner for Children and Young People) will receive this trophy to display.

Award winning Music Feedback and Song of the Year

Congratulations to all those involved with Music Feedback and Song of the Year. Last week the initiative won the prestigious Australian Business Arts Foundation Award for Arts Health Partnerships. The judges recognised the partnership that the Mental Health Commission had established with the West Australian Music Industry Association because it helped reduce stigma and promote mental health through music. It also had solid community partnerships and strong take up from musicians. The initiative is now in the running for the National Awards which are being held in Perth for the first time on 11 October.

Eddie Bartnik
Commissioner