A message from the Commissioner

It has been an eventful and challenging year for the Commission with progress on a number of fronts. Through the dedication and skills of our people, we delivered an ambitious, integrated program of work to ensure people who experience mental health problems and/or mental illness are supported to stay in the community, out of hospital and live a meaningful life.

The Mental Health Commission is a relatively small organisation with much responsibility. We work in a complex field with many varied streams that are constantly changing and the effects of our activities can be far reaching and in some cases, life changing. 2012 promises to be even busier year, as we work together to deliver the new Mental Health Bill and implement our Action Plan to achieve a modern and effective mental health system, with increased services and support for people who experience mental health problems and/or mental illness.

I thank you for your continuous support and I wish you a happy and prosperous Christmas. I look forward to working together again in 2012.

Mental Health Bill 2011: Draft open for public comment

On 16 December, the Minister for Mental Health Hon Helen Morton MLC launched the draft Mental Health Bill 2011 that is now open for public comment. The consultation period will end on 9 March 2012 and it is anticipated that a final Bill will be introduced in Parliament in mid 2012.

The draft Bill will have significant impact for people who come into contact with the mental health system, in particular mental health consumers, carers and clinicians, with input from families written into the legislation, also for the first time in WA.

The Mental Health Commission published a summary overview and explanatory guide to ensure that people understand the proposed changes and are able to make informed comment. To provide feedback on the draft Mental Health Bill 2011 visit our website.

The Mental Health Commission also released the Henderson Report, which was commissioned to provide advice on a quality assurance framework for mental health in Western Australia. The Report, prepared by international advisor on mental health, Gregor Henderson, has informed many of the directions in the draft Bill.

The release of the draft Mental Health Bill 2011 and the Henderson Report represents an important milestone in the State Government’s ongoing work, where everyone works together for the mental health and well-being of all people in Western Australia.

Mental Health 2020-Making it personal and everyone’s business

In October 2011, the Premier Hon Colin Barnett MLC launched the State Government’s 10 year strategic plan Mental Health 2020: Making it personal and everybody’s business.

The strategic policy sets out three key directions that will drive all decisions relating to mental health policy, planning and funding. They include person centred supports and services; connected approaches and balanced investment. Nine action areas form the backbone of the Mental Health Action Plan that will be released in early 2012.
Crisis Prevention Planning

The Mental Health Commission has provided funding to North Metropolitan MHS to establish a pilot project and introduce shared Crisis Awareness Plans in two metropolitan centres – Rockingham and Swan, as well as two regional centres, Broome and Denmark. People with mental illness may have numerous care plans including plans for support in a crisis. If a person receives support from more than one source it is likely that some of these plans are duplicated. Currently it is difficult for service providers to support consumers to develop their own plan and for it to be recognised and utilised by all the services a consumer may be engaged with.

The pilot project will assist this process and set out a future path in the way we support people with mental illness. The project is supported by the Collaboration and Service Integration Reference Group which is comprised of consumers and carers, and service providers from public and non-government mental health services.

Ministerial Council on Suicide Prevention

The Minister for Mental Health Hon Helen Morton MLC recently announced 19 year old Joshua Cunniffe as a new member to the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention.

Mr Cunniffe was 12 years old when his grandfather, who'd been suffering from depression, committed suicide. During his teenage years living in Bunbury, Josh also suffered from depression but rather than getting help he tried to work it out on his own, like so many people do. He was struggling with the illness for some time and after a while he tried to take his own life. Thankfully he reached out to the right person at the right time and is now passionate about suicide prevention. He has also written an inspiring book “Behind the Smile”.

The State Government has invested $13million in the State Suicide Prevention Strategy, as key priority of mental health reform. So far, 21 Community Action Plans (CAPs) have been rolled out in more than 71 individual locations across the State.

For more information on the community led Western Australian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2009-2013 visit the One Life Suicide Prevention Strategy website.

Changes at the Commission

Appointments to the executive roles are now being finalised and will be announced early in the New Year. Thank you to A/Directors Myra Browne and Annette Keller who are both moving on to the Drug and Alcohol Office. You will be missed.

Consumer and carer engagement

The Minister for Mental Health announced that Consumers of Mental Health WA Inc (CoMHWA) was the successful proponent to form the Consumer Association, a voice for mental health consumers in WA with annual recurrent funding by the Commission and mentoring by WAAMH.

The announcement was made on 18 September at the Mental Health Commission’s event for consumers, where more than 30 consumers provided feedback on the proposed new Charter of Rights attached to the draft Mental Health Bill 2011.

The CoMHWA management committee has also reviewed and updated its constitution at a Special General Meeting on 5 December 2011 which is currently being processed by the Department of Commerce. The committee also recently employed its first employee, the administration assistant. To date, the committee has relied on the fantastic help of many volunteers.

The Committee has also been extremely busy preparing to recruit the new Executive Director as well as new Board members who will be elected at its AGM to be held on 30 January 2012 at Richmond Fellowship, 32 Burton Street, Cannington. To RSVP please call 9350 8824 or email comhwa_inc@yahoo.com.au.

Eddie Bartnik
Mental Health Commissioner