



Private Mental Health Consumer
Carer Network (Australia) Limited

engage, empower, enable choice in private mental health

Activities of the:

**PRIVATE MENTAL HEALTH
CONSUMER CARER NETWORK
(AUSTRALIA)**

Since inception - 2002

1 Introduction

The *Private Mental Health Consumer Carer Network (Australia)* [Network] has come a long way since its **formal** inception in 2004. Over the course of its short history the Network has made significant impact on the mental health sector both in terms of private sector settings and the mental health system more broadly. This is represented now by wide recognition that the Network has significant presence as the Australian peak private mental health sector consumer and carer organisation and as the recognised authoritative voice concerning the policies and practices of providers and funders as they affect consumers and carers using private sector mental health services.

The Network's workload has progressively and significantly increased, particularly in the last four or so years with a great deal of activity nationally within mental health. This has come from within the private mental health sector and from external requests and invitations either to the Network itself or our representatives, to present the private mental health consumer and carer perspectives in a number of forums.

We have appeared by invitation before **ten Parliamentary Inquiries**, have/have had representatives on **sixty six Boards, Working Groups or Committees**, have made **forty one formal Submissions** and have been invited to actively contribute and participate in **six national Forums**.

Project development and management has also been an important activity undertaken by the Network since we were first funded in **2007** by the Commonwealth to run **a national project** across both public and private mental health sectors called the *Identifying the Carer Project*. This was completed on time and within the budget. In **2009** a **further two Projects** following this theme were completed during 2010. Reports can be viewed on our website www.pmhccn.com.au. The Network formed a 5 member Consortium for a **third national project** which commenced on **1st March, 2015** which developed a '*Practical Guide for working with carers of people with a mental illness*' This involved national consultations across Australia.

An Australian first activity for the Network was the undertaking of two national surveys, one for consumers about their experiences of care with the diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and the second for carers, caring for someone with the diagnosis of BPD. The data has been analysed and appears in the following Reports which are posted on our website www.pmhccn.com.au

- 1) *Foundations for Change, Summary Report* BPD - consumers and carers experiences of care
- 2) *Foundations for Change, PART 1 CONSUMERS, Experiences of Consumers with the Diagnosis of BPD*
- 3) *Foundations for Change, PART 2 CARERS, Experiences carers supporting someone with the diagnosis of BPD*

A further challenge for the Network was the convening of the 2nd National BPD Awareness Day **Conference** in Adelaide on Friday 5th October, 2012 in partnership with Flinders University, Faculty of Health Sciences.

The Network has always been proactive in all undertakings and has worked vigorously in attaining the objectives and goals of our first Strategic Plan 2004-2006 and our Work Plans for 2007-08, 2009-11, 2012-13 and 2014-2015.

2 Structure of the Network

The Chair Ms Janne McMahon OAM, who is a consumer, heads the Network.

Each Australian state and the Australian Capital Territory has its own Network Coordinator and well established State Advisory Forums which meet formally twice per year for approximately 2-4 hours.

The role of the State Coordinator is to represent the views at the national level of the people of their respective state who receive their treatment and care, and their family carers from private mental health settings. Through these mechanisms, the Network has direct links to a very large proportion of consumers and carers at the 'coalface' within private sector settings.

Transparency of the Network and its activities is also wide reaching with distribution of the minutes of the meetings, including the posting of these on the Network website www.pmhccn.com.au

The Network receives funding from the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Private Hospitals Association, the Commonwealth Department of Health, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the Australian Psychological Society. The RANZCP also hosts the meetings of the National Committee in their headquarters in Melbourne.

This gives us a wonderful opportunity of furthering the activities of the Network often in partnership with one or more of these organisations. We are grateful for the continued financial and other supports provided to the Network.

3 Activities of the Network

The Network has made formal submission and commented on a wide range of mental health inquiries and issues. This has seen the Network *invited* in its own right and represented by the Chair Ms Janne McMahon, to appear before the following parliamentary inquiries:

- Senate Community Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services, November, 2011
- Senate Select Committee – Inquiry into men's health, Adelaide April, 2009
- Senate Community Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Mental Health Services, informal meeting, August, 2008
- Senate Community Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Mental Health Services, informal meeting, August, 2008
- House of Representatives Standing Committee, on Family, Community, Housing and Youth, Inquiry into better support for Carers, August 2008
- Senate Community Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia, May 2008
- Senate Community Affairs Committee – Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia – Roundtable, August 2007
- Senate Select Committee on Mental Health, September 2005

The Chair Ms Janne McMahon together with two other representatives from private mental health, had a separate meeting with the Independent Evaluators of the 3rd National Mental Health Plan, 2003-2008 in Melbourne August 2007

Network coordinators have been appointed in their own right or as representatives of the Network to either Board positions or other significant or major appointments as follows:

1. Associate Editor, 'Chronic Illness'
2. Australian BPD Foundation, Patron
3. Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, Consumer Surveyor
4. BMC International Section Editor of the Year, 2016



5. BMC Psychiatry Section Editor, Social psychiatry section
6. Director of the Flinders University's Department of Psychiatry Research Unit
7. Helping Mind, President
8. MC for 5th National BPD Awareness Conference, Adelaide
9. MC for Reconnexion Conference, Melbourne
10. Mental Health Australia, Director
11. Mental Health Carers Australia, Vice President
12. NMHCCF Issues Workshop, co-designed, developed and delivered
13. SA Health Practitioners Tribunal, Member
14. Sharon Lawn made full Professor, July 2015
15. Suicide Prevention Australia, author lived Experience Newsletters
16. WA Legal Aid Review Committee, Member

Network Coordinators participated in a range of other meetings, committees and events to advance the interests of both the mental health *consumers* who receive their treatment and care in the private sector, and *carers*. These meetings and events bring a great deal of information, knowledge and expertise to the Network. Currently they are represented on 64 committees, etc.

Project development and management:

The Network **developed and managed** the:

- 1) **Identifying the Carer Project in 2007**
- 2) **Carers Identified? Project in 2010**
- 3) **Engagement with General Practice, 2010**
- 4) **A Practical Guide for working with carers of people with a mental illness, 2015**

4 Future Direction of the Network

Our direction will be as it has been since our inception, in that we are dedicated to effective consumer and carer participation as the driving force in all elements of change in private sector mental health services.

The Network will:

- Continue as the peak consumer and carer organisation for private mental health in Australia;
- Continue advocacy to improve the lives of mental health consumers and carers;
- Continue to advocate for the needs of mental health consumers and carers;
- Facilitate and expand our network base, consistent with our structure;
- Foster our current partnerships with key provider and funder organisations and facilitate engagement with new entities;
- Build the capacity of the Network to undertake new directions; and
- Continue to develop a grander vision.