



## **E-NEWSLETTER, ISSUE #3 - AUGUST 2009**

### **Executive Officer's Welcome**

Welcome to the next addition of the MHCT E-News. Since the last issue we have had to sadly say goodbye to Kathryn Ottaway, who has been holidaying overseas and interstate. Kathryn was a wonderful help in the MHCT office as the ultimate organiser, and her skills are sadly missed. We hope that she returns speedily to Tasmania. When visiting the office, and please do, you might notice a few changes, the biggest being that the Tasmanian Mental Health Consumer Network (TMHCN) and Official Visitors are no longer auspiced by the MHCT. The TMHCN ceased operation on 30 June, and we now eagerly await the release of the Consumer and Carer Participation Review. The Official Visitors now sit under the Ombudsman at the Department of Justice. You can contact them on 1800 001 170.

In this edition, the usual features are included, but make sure you look at our section on resources. We have an increasing selection of books and DVDs that are available to be borrowed, as well as various brochures. In this edition Liz Clements has reviewed Broken Open by Craig Hamilton. It sounds like an intriguing read.

As always I am out and about meeting with members and stakeholders, and I look forward to seeing you shortly.

Cheers

Michelle

### **MHCT Update**

Members and other stakeholders are often interested to know what partnerships, committees and forums the MHCT represents them on. Following is a current list, if you have any questions about any of them, or would like the MHCT to be aware of a specific issue which we could progress on your behalf then don't hesitate to contact us on 6224 9222 or email [Adele](#) or [Michelle](#).

Committees that the MHCT is involved with include:

- Agency Sector Forum
- ATDC Comorbidity Working Group – Cross Sectoral Support and Strategic Partnerships Project
- Carer Networks
- Community Mental Health Australia
- Community Sector Peaks Network
- COPMI National Reference Group (Community Mental Health Australia representative)
- DHHS Consumer and Community Engagement Strategy
- Mental Health Council of Australia – Health Promotion Group
- Mental Health Services/Community Sector Interface
- Mental Health Week Steering Committee
- Our Island Our Voices – Advisory Group
- Regional Mental Health Groups
- Southern Women's Health Interagency Network
- Statewide and Mental Health Services Comorbidity Steering Committee
- TasCOSS Board – Peak Organisation representative
- Tasmanian Inter Agency Working Group for Mental Health

- Tasmanian Social Policy Council
- Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Committee
- Tasmanian Transcultural Mental Health Network

## Members

The MHCT is reviewing its criteria for determining membership. This will mean some changes in the eligibility of who can apply for membership – come to our AGM in October to find out more. You can find our [current list of members](#) online.

## Resources Review

You may not be aware of the variety of resources that we have at the MHCT. Recently we have obtained a series of new books and DVDs. We have also been liaising with our member organisations to ensure that we have the most up to date information about the services provided statewide. And, we will continue to search far and wide for information on a wide range of mental illnesses for consumers and carers. We are still in the process of developing a catalogue of everything that we have, but please feel free to drop by any time to investigate our resources, borrow a book or take a few brochures.



Liz Clements (Project Manager Climbing Fences; pictured left) recently read one of our new books. Below is her book review:

### **Broken Open**

By Craig Hamilton with Neil Jameson. First published in 2004 by Bantam.

Broken Open is an extremely enlightening and interesting read. I read this book over one weekend and found it helpful to look into the dark places of someone else's life.

The essence of the story of Craig Hamilton and his experience with Bipolar is to ask for help, and to not do the bloke thing and just be ok when you could be great. This book looks at his journey both before he was diagnosed and after and the adjustments that he and his family has had to make. Now with a changed life style and regular treatment and observation by family members, this family lives with Bipolar and still has an every day existence.

## Upcoming Events

### ***Families at the Cutting Edge of Research - Symposium***

The MHCT will convene a day-long Symposium, **Families at the Cutting Edge of Research**, to be held in Launceston on Monday 5th October 2009. This is an activity of the Building Capacity in Community Mental Health Family Support & Respite Project funded by FaHCSIA.

This symposium is generally expected to attract participants from around Tasmania including mental health clinicians, community sector representatives, consumers and carers.

The symposium hopes to contribute to capacity building within the whole mental health sector, with aims particularly to:

- recognise the value in supporting and working with family, carers and other persons with close emotional relationships with people with severe mental illness
- more effectively reach out and work with family, carers and those most closely associated with consumers

- increase the collaborative dialogue between clinical and community service sectors in regards to more comprehensive interventions for the consumer and their closest associates

This is a unique opportunity for the clinical and community sectors to come together and openly discuss the issues, learn from others, network and actively contribute towards the development of potential solutions that the MHCT may be able to progress.

If you wish to ensure you receive an invitation for this event, please email [Anne Bevan](#) or call her on 6224 9222.



### **Mental Health Week 2009**

Mental Health Week for 2009 is not far away. This year Mental Health Week is between Sunday 4 October and Saturday 10 October. A variety of events will be happening around the state, so make sure you start pencilling into your diary the events in your area. Please refer to this year's [webpage](#) for more information.

### **MHCT Annual General Meeting – 29 October**

October is one of those busy months in the year, and we hope that you make attending this year's MHCT Annual General Meeting (AGM) one of your priority events to attend. This fun filled event will include the usual excitement synonymous with an AGM, but this year the excitement will be taken to a new level with the launch of the Workforce Development, Planning and Innovation report. Consultant maree fudge (pictured right hand at work and loving it at the Workforce Development, Planning and Innovation Forum) was contracted earlier in the year by the MHCT to map the community mental health sector workforce, and to work with members to identify practical innovations and actions to addressing the labour and skills shortages facing the mental health sector. After months of research and consultation, maree will attend the AGM and in launching the report, provide a presentation of the key findings and where we might, as a sector, go from here. Please watch your in- and post- boxes for invitations.



## **Sector in Focus**

### ***The policy waltz at the ball for improved mental health services***

In our first MHCT E-News, the "Year of the Review" was referred to. Governments, both state and national, have been engaging the sector in consultation in the ongoing process of review and change of existing mental health policy, frameworks and strategy. It's not surprising that many people are left wondering just what will happen with mental health in the future. But, the mental health sector is really no different from any other health sector, with the Australian Government taking more time to consult over the next twelve months on the back of the final report from the National Health and Hospital's Reform Commission. We really can have no idea what the future holds for the delivery of mental health services.

The policy dance at the ball for improved mental health services most likely started before the 2007 federal election, when the former Prime Minister announced the take over of the Mersey Hospital. No, this is not specifically related to mental health. However, it sparked the intense focus on health services during the election, including Kevin Rudd's election promise to form the National Health and Hospital's Reform Commission.

While the change in government certainly has impacted on the policy environment, the last twelve or so months have also coincided with routine reviews and updates, including the Fourth National Mental Health Plan. However, what is perplexing and frustrating is the lack of coordination in what has resulted in an ad hoc piecemeal review process. To provide an example, the MHCT has this year

been involved in discussions nationally about the impact on the community mental health sector if the Australian Government was to proceed with the devolution of mental health funding to the states. On the other hand, the National Health and Hospital's Reform Commission have suggested that the Australian Government fund all mental health services. How can two separate policies, originating from the same level of government, be proposing courses of action that are diametrically opposed?

The problems we face in the community mental health sector are not new, and yet governments continue to ask for input and advice in their policy development. As the peak body for Tasmania's community mental health sector, it is part of our role to ask questions. Some questions that come to mind include: Are the problems we cite insurmountable? Is it an impossibility to prioritise funding on promotion, prevention and early intervention? Is it an impossibility to invest in more community based recovery services? Is it an incongruous idea to suggest that similarly qualified professionals working in the community sector should earn the same as their public sector colleagues?

The policy waltz at the ball for improved mental health services is one of balance and often careful footwork. It is also one of immense opportunity, particularly in Tasmania currently. With the state election in six month's time, we have a unique opportunity in Tasmania to come together as a sector, and even as a community, through the [Our Island Our Voices](#) campaign. Through Our Island Our Voices, you can join the campaign for a fairer Tasmania. With the campaign open to all Tasmanian's to join, this is the chance the community mental health sector has to get the steps right and maybe even enjoy the ball.

## Member in Focus

### ***ARAFMI Tasmania celebrates 25 Years***

Mental health carers and friends celebrate 25 years in Tasmania in 2009.

The Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI) aims to improve the quality of life of families, carers and friends of those living with mental illness. ARAFMI's service model is through carer or peer delivery which makes ARAFMI unique. We provide information and referral, community awareness and education, contribute to policy and legislative review processes and advocate for better services. The evidence is in - by supporting family members and carers, the person with mental illness receives better support.

We promote quality improvement in the mental health sector and strive for greater participation for carers at all levels of the sector too. ARAFMI also strives to break down stigmatizing barriers for people with mental illness and to facilitate their involvement in the life of the community.

ARAFMI is a state-wide service and has volunteers involved in phone befriending services for carers, peer support meetings for carers and consumers and is soon to expand our presence into rural Tasmania. We provide a free newsletter, library, workshops and a web site with links to previous newsletters and other information. Contact the Executive Officer David Barnes on 6228 7448 and visit our web site [www.arafmitas.org.au](http://www.arafmitas.org.au).

*If you wish to be on the mailing list for this e-news, please [contact us](#)*

*The peak body representing the community mental health sector in Tasmania at a state and national level*

