



The peak organisation representing the non-government mental health sector in Tasmania at a state and national level

Submission

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)



The Mental Health Council of Tasmania has a vision for a vibrant and effective mental health sector in Tasmania.

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The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) is the peak body representing the interests of consumer, carer and community mental health sector organisations, providing a public voice for people affected by mental illness and the organisations in the community sector that work with them.

The MHCT advocates for effective public policy on mental health for the benefit of the Tasmanian community as a whole and has a strong commitment to participating in processes that contribute to the effective provision of mental health services in Tasmania. As such, the MHCT is ideally placed to be able to comment on the draft document prepared by NMHCCF entitled “Supporting and developing the consumer and carer identified workforce – a strategic approach to recovery.”

The new 4th National Mental Health Plan promotes the implementation of a recovery orientated culture within mental health. To support this, the Plan proposes the establishment of opportunities for meaningful involvement of consumers and carers.¹

The MHCT supports NMHCCF focus on the five identified areas of recommendations for supporting and developing the consumer and carer identified workforce. These include:

1. Implementing the 4th National Mental Health Plan that focuses on recovery orientated mental health services
2. Identifying the existing consumer and carer workforce
3. Implementation of recovery orientated mental health services
4. Supporting and developing the consumer carer identified workforce
5. Developing the future consumer and carer identified workforce

The MHCT endorses this exciting piece of work by the MNHCCF. The MHCT would like to make further comments on the following points of the document.

The MHCT supports the idea of conducting a Tasmanian Consumer Workers Forum, which mimics the NSW Consumers Workers Forum Project. The aims are to develop a framework for consumer workers in NSW that defines roles, functions, responsibilities and titles; clarifies remuneration requirements; identify minimum standards for supervision, support and professional development; develops an evaluation framework for consumer worker roles; and identifies a minimum level of training and education required. Also need to consider what roles need to be undertaken by employees and the roles volunteers may perform. It also aims to develop a range of supports for consumer workers including a code of professional standards and a report on best practice delivery.

Recommendation 4.12 in the report outlines developing leadership and healthy organisational culture values within the work place. The MHCT supports the concept of mental health managers and policy areas in demonstrating their commitment to change by modelling appropriate behaviours and reallocating resources to support

the consumer and carer identified workforce and its integration. The MHCT suggest that this could be achieved through working in partnership with the Workforce Development Unit, Department of Health and Human Services, Southern Mental Health Services. The MHCT recommends this training be compulsory for all Mental Health Service staff. Once completed and evaluated it then be rolled out in other areas such as housing, employment and justice.

Recommendation 5.1 in the report addresses the development of a National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Workforce Strategy. The MHCT fully endorses this concept and encourages the carriage of this through the newly established consumer organisation.

Recommendation 4.10 in the report addressed the notion of independence and consumer employees disclosing information about their illness, whereby they do not feel it relevant to their work arrangements. The MHCT recognises that this is a decision which needs to sit with the individual consumer employee and thus does not support this decision as a “blanket” rule.

ⁱ Australian Health Ministers, 2009, 4th National Mental Health Plan – an agenda for collaborative government action in mental health 2009-2014, Australian Government, Canberra 2009.