



# MHCA NEWSLETTER

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<b>Mental Health Council of Australia</b>	<b>MHCA Patrons:</b>
PO Box 174 DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600	Senator the Hon Helen Coonan
Phone 02 6285 3100	Prof Allan Fels AO
Fax: (02) 6285 2166	Mr David Galbally QC
Email: admin@mhca.org.au	Ms Jessica Rowe
Website: www.mhca.org.au	Mr Peter Overton
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### FROM THE DEPUTY CEO

2006 has arrived as a year full of promise for positive change in mental health in Australia. Following the documented tragedies of the MHCA's *Not For Service* report, Prime Minister John Howard and the state premiers have agreed that the issue warrants the full attention of the Council of Australian Governments, which will meet on 10 February in Canberra.

The Mental Health Council has been working to ensure that this COAG meeting is as successful as possible. In particular, we are keen to see from COAG an ongoing process by which the all governments commit to better deal for mental health. We need to see a serious increase in funding for mental health which better reflects its status as the third largest the burden of disease in Australia. This increased funding must also be aligned to the stated community priorities in mental health: health promotion, prevention, early intervention, and more community-based services.

We learned recently that Dr Geoff Gallop will not be attending this COAG meeting and has in fact resigned as Premier of WA citing depression. This is yet another example of the devastating effects this mental illness can have on a person regardless of their occupation or social status. Dr Gallop is to be congratulated for having the courage to state clearly that it was depression that caused his resignation. The Council wishes Dr Gallop a speedy recovery.

The Commonwealth chose the week before Christmas to release two key mental health reports: the *National Mental Health Report 2004* (reflecting 2002-03 data and published by

the Department of Health and Ageing); and *Mental Health Services 2003-04* (published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

The MHCA is reviewing both these weighty tomes now. However, the National Mental Health Report 2004 does reveal some important points:

- Expenditure on mental health services by governments has merely kept pace with the general increase across all health spending. Mental health spending still amounts to only 7% of total health spending;
- While the number of staff working in ambulatory and community settings appears to have increased, the report does not provide data showing any commensurate increase in community-based services;
- The number of acute care hospital beds has remained stable, despite increasing demand;
- Government investment in alternative models of accommodation and residential care has not occurred, with the exception of Victoria (and Tasmania and the ACT to a lesser extent). As the report states:

*“Lack of development of such services by most jurisdictions remains a significant issue in relation to the commitment by all states and territories to develop a full range of community services to replace the historical functions of the stand alone psychiatric hospitals”.*

- Funding to NGOs varies wildly across jurisdictions with Victoria again the lead state, accounting for about half the national total of NGO funding in 2002-03. The NGO sector in Victoria gets about 11.5% of the total mental health budget for that state, with the ACT second on 11.4%. SA is the worst performer on this marker at 2.1% followed by NSW on 2.4% with the national average being 6.2%.

These findings reflect the Council's findings in its *Not For Service* Report and add to the weight of evidence to support the urgent need for major reform of the mental health system across the country.

You can find copies of the Commonwealth Government reports at:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/mental-nmhr05>

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10193>

Best wishes to all for a happy and productive 2006.

*Sebastian Rosenberg*  
MHCA Deputy CEO

## **MENTAL HEALTH NEWS**

### **Counselling and exercise effective for mental health - survey finds**

High levels of stress and being overweight and physically inactive, are the most common health concerns for people with a mental illness revealed in the latest survey by SANE Australia.

Counselling and exercise were reported as the most effective ways to deal with these health issues, however expense, medication side-effects, poor motivation due to the illness, and lack of referral by health professionals make it difficult for people to access these strategies.

Seventy-four percent of those surveyed reported that counselling was the most effective treatment after medication to improve their health, while 57% found exercise of great benefit.

Respondents indicated that they try to keep well by using a range of strategies, including yoga, relaxation techniques, diet, vitamins and natural therapies, but that alternative therapies were less effective than counselling and exercise.

Barbara Hocking, Executive Director of SANE Australia, said, "We now know that people with mental illness have serious concerns about their general health and that they are active in trying to improve it. However lack of access to, and the costs associated with these services make it difficult for them. We must take action to address these barriers."

SANE Australia recommends:

- physical health screening to be coordinated with mental health treatment
- referral by clinicians to programs that promote an active and health lifestyle
- GPs to refer people for up to 12 sessions of counselling with a psychologist, covered by Medicare.

The research bulletin 'Mental Illness and Keeping Well' is available at [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

## **GPs Forced to Ration Mental Health Care**

GPs are being banned from referring mentally ill patients for psychological counselling under the Better Outcomes in Mental Health program because of massive funding shortfalls for the service.

See the full story in Australian doctor at:  
<http://news.australiandoctor.com.au/articles/b6/0c03bbb6.asp>

## **Mental Health Training Encourages GP's**

Recent survey by Australian Doctor investigated impact of the provision of training on mental health to GPs and their confidence working with people with mental illness, compared to others.

**See the result here:** <http://news.australiandoctor.com.au/articles/01/0c034f01.asp>

## **MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

### **"Out of the Blue: Managing Depression"**

Free copies of the Rural Health Education Foundation's "Out of the Blue: Managing Depression" program are now available on DVD and video.

Information on the program can be found by visiting  
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/505/505.html>

To order your free DVD or VHS video copy (one copy per person or organisation only within Australia), simply email [rhef@rhef.com.au](mailto:rhef@rhef.com.au) or fax on (02) 6232-5484 specifying your preferred format, your name, organisation, postal address, contact telephone number and/or email address.

**LIFELINE'S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14**

Lifeline's Just ask is a rural mental health information service. Information provided includes: referral to services and web sites, printed material and a range of self help resources.

The self-help resources focus on practical steps to help promote mental health in a range of areas.

For information and copies of resources call or visit <http://www.justask.org.au> and further information is available at [national@lifeline.org.au](mailto:national@lifeline.org.au) and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

## **BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391**

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia.

For more information <http://www.bushcrisisline.org.au>

## **Transcultural Psychiatry Website Update**

The website of the Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry continues to be updated to provide website users with current information on cross-cultural issues in mental health practice.

Check out the new Transcultural Links page at <http://www.vtpu.org.au/links/> which provides links to many transcultural and related websites and resources, including Migrant Resource Centres and the Victorian Multicultural Resources Directory.

## **Australian Government Response to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee reports *Forgotten Australians* and *Protecting Vulnerable Children: A national challenge***

Following its inquiry into Children in Institutional Care, the Senate Community Affairs References Committee produced two reports: *Forgotten Australians*; and *Protecting Vulnerable Children: A national challenge*. The Australian Government's response to these reports was tabled in the Senate on 10 November 2005.

Copies of the Australian Government Response can be found at:  
[http://www.facs.gov.au/Internet/facsinternet.nsf/News/govt\\_response\\_forgotten\\_austs.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/Internet/facsinternet.nsf/News/govt_response_forgotten_austs.htm)

## **Not For Service Report CDs**

Due to unprecedented demand the MHCA has produced more CD-Rom copies of the *Not For Service* report. CD-Roms and the hard copies of the Summary of the Report are available from the MHCA Secretariat for a reasonable price plus postage.

For all enquiries please email: [admin@mhca.org.au](mailto:admin@mhca.org.au)

The full report and the Summary are also available on the MHCA website at:  
<http://www.mhca.org.au/notforservice/index.html>

## EVENTS

February 2006

### **World Day of the Sick: Papal visit and conference 'Mental Health & Human Dignity'**

11 - 13 February 2006

Adelaide , Australia

The Pope will deliver his World Day of the Sick message to bishops, priests, worshippers and health professionals expected to attend this Adelaide event.

The one day conference on 11th Feb includes the following speakers:

- His Eminence Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan
- Professor Ian Hickie
- Anne Deveson
- Garry McDonald
- Father Peter A.Comensoli
- Dr Prue McEvoy
- Monsignor David Cappo, Vicar-General.

**For further information:**

John Luttrell

Catholic Church Office 39 Wakefield Street, Adelaide SA 5000

**Phone:** +61 8 8210 8220

**Fax:** +61 8 8223 2307

**E-Mail:** [jluttrell@adelaide.catholic.org.au](mailto:jluttrell@adelaide.catholic.org.au)

**Web Site:** <http://www.worlddayofthesick.org.au/site/page.cfm>

### **Blossoming of Our Children - Resilience, Rights, Responsibilities: Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect**

14 Feb 2006 to 16 February 2006

Wellington

New Zealand

The presentations from our keynote and invited speakers will provide insights into solutions and innovative approaches they have used when working with families, children and young people who are at risk of, or who have suffered from, abuse or neglect.

**For further information:**

ACCAN

PO Box 10-612 Wellington

**Phone:** 0064 4 473 8044

**Fax:** 0064 4 473 8042

**E-Mail:** [accan@avenues.co.nz](mailto:accan@avenues.co.nz)

**Web Site:** <http://www.nzfvc.org.nz/accan/>

### **Rural & Remote Mental Health Conference: Best Practice in the Bush - Dream or Delusion?**

16 Feb 2006 to 17 February 2006

Albany, WA

Australia

The conference will focus on the extra challenges in living in, working in, or planning for rural mental health care which may be faced by:

- people with a mental illness;
- carers;

-clinicians;  
-service providers;  
-planners and policy makers.

**Keynote speakers will be:**

- Professor Ernest Hunter who will examine best practice in indigenous mental health care  
- Professor Patrick McGorry who will focus on best practice in the management of early-episode psychosis.

**For further information:**

S Lonie, Project Officer  
Rural & Remote Mental Health Conference, PO Box 1411, Albany WA 6331

**Phone:** (08) 98922440

**Fax:** (08) 98421028

**E-Mail:** [sandra.lonie@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:sandra.lonie@health.wa.gov.au)

**Web Site:** <http://www.rrmc.health.wa.gov.au/home/>

## March 2006

### **Queensland Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Conference 2006**

30 Mar 2006 to 31 March 2006

Brisbane

Australia

The Queensland Government is hosting the inaugural Queensland Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Conference 2006: Sharing learnings from practice and research.

This two-day conference will provide delegates with current information and knowledge to effectively work towards the prevention of suicide and self-harm.

**For further information:**

**Phone:** (07) 3404 3058

**Fax:** (07) 3224 2811

**E-Mail:** [spconference@communities.qld.gov.au](mailto:spconference@communities.qld.gov.au)

**Web Site:**

[http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/suicide\\_prevention/conference\\_details.html](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/suicide_prevention/conference_details.html)

### **The Australian Financial Review's 8th Annual Health Congress**

Building a Quality Australian Health Care Infrastructure: Improving the health of individuals and communities into the future.

1st - 3rd March 2006. Four Points by Sheraton, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

Featuring addresses by the Minister for Health Tony Abbott and Chair of the Mental Health Council, Keith Wilson.

For more information see [www.informa.com.au/health2006](http://www.informa.com.au/health2006)

Contact: Informa Australia, Level 2, 120 Sussex Street Sydney, NSW, 2001

Tel: 02 9080 4300 Fax: 02 9290 2577 Email: [enquiries@informa.com.au](mailto:enquiries@informa.com.au)

### **The Great Australian Dream? Waking Up To Homelessness 4<sup>th</sup> National Homelessness Conference 2006**

1-3 March, 2006 Sydney Convention Centre

The 4th National Homelessness Conference will focus on continued development of a strategic response to homelessness in Australia including:

- strategies to prevent homelessness

- homelessness service system development
- improved responses from other service systems to Australians experiencing homelessness

#### Conference Themes T

- Addressing structural causes of homelessness
- Promoting strengths, sharing good ideas
- Removing barriers to better outcomes for homeless Australians
- Australian homelessness in 2015?
- future policy and service responses to homelessness

Conference Co-ordinators: Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations  
 PO Box 139, CALWELL ACT 2905  
 Ph: (02) 6292 9000 Fax: (02) 6292 9002 Email: afho@confco.com.au

## **Sport and Mental Health Conference: From Chemistry to Communities**

6-7 March 2006

Hilton on the Park,  
 Melbourne

Mental illness knows no boundaries. It can affect the rich and famous as well as the poor and underprivileged. Included amongst the afflicted are elite athletes, some of whom are household names, as well as former champions who have struggled to cope with retirement and adjust to life outside the limelight.

At a time when many of the world's leading athletes, coaches, managers and enthusiastic spectators are gathering in Melbourne, this conference will provide an opportunity to reflect on both the benefits of exercise and sport on mental health, as well as the problems that competitive sport at the highest level inflicts on the mental wellbeing of its current and former participants.

The conference will bring together not only academics, clinicians and educators, but also many well known sporting identities, coaches and managers. It will explore and examine both the emotional benefits of sport on the individual and society, as well as the psychological hazards often faced by individual participants, teams and the community.

For more information see <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/general-practice/conf/index.html>  
 Or contact: Ms Katy Symmons, Conference Manager, Monash University  
 Tel: +61 3 8575 2214 Fax: +61 3 8575 2233 Email: [katy.symmons@med.monash.edu.au](mailto:katy.symmons@med.monash.edu.au)

### **April 2006**

## **Women and Depression Conference 2006**

6 Apr 2006 to 9 April 2006

Sydney  
 Australia

This conference explores the challenges of depression in relation to women. The approach is multifaceted, to reflect both the diversity of women, and the complexity of depression per se. But it contains an underlying and unifying theme which is rarely acknowledged either in biomedical discourse or popular debate:

"Depression is always influenced by social and political dimensions. While not reducible to socio-political factors, depression cannot be seen in "personal" terms alone".

This suggests the need for holistic healing in the wide senses of the term. Depression is

clearly not gender specific, and many aspects of the conference may be pertinent to men. But the focus on women is maintained.

**For further information:**

Anique Duc

Conference Secretariat 21 Mungay Creek Rd Willawarrin 2440

**Phone:** 61 2 6567 1585

**E-Mail:** [conference@herwill.net](mailto:conference@herwill.net)

**Web Site:** <http://www.womenanddepression.herwill.net/index.html>

## **Happiness and its Causes**

2 April 2006

Sydney

Australia

The 1st International Conference on Happiness & Its Causes provides a platform for understanding both the latest research and ancient wisdom on the capacity of the mind to develop positive emotions. It is a forum that will encourage comparisons between Eastern and Western approaches to enhancing happiness.

Supporting organisations include Mental Health Foundation of Australia, Lifeline, Vajrayana Institute, Relationships Australia.

**For further information:**

Terrapinn Customer Service

**Phone:** +61 2 9005 0777

**E-Mail:** [office@vajrayana.com.au](mailto:office@vajrayana.com.au).

## **Partnerships Towards Recovery: Mental Health Conference 2006**

26-28 April 2006,

Heath Function Centre

Caulfield Racecourse,

Melbourne

An international Psychosocial Rehabilitation Conference to showcase, present and discuss community mental health partnerships in all their possibilities at local, national, global and transcultural levels.

The Conference targets mental health service providers, mental health consumers, carers and families, government officials, academics, students and the media. It will be promoted across the Asia Pacific region.

Joint organisers of the conference: VICSERV :Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria and the Richmond Fellowship ASPAC.

For more information see <http://partnerships2006-rfv.vicserv.org.au>

Or Ph: (613) 9482 7111

## **May 2006**

### **Consumers' Issues Mental Health for Young and Old Conference**

3 May 2006 to 4 May 2006

Dee Why, NSW

Mental Health is Everybody's Business. Come along and join us for an eventful 2 Days discussing a broad range of issues which affect people with a mental illness, their carers, service providers and the general community.

This conference is being hosted by the Consumer Activity Network (Mental Health) Inc. for people with a mental illness (consumers), carers, service providers and the general community from anywhere within Australia and/or overseas. Students are also welcome.

**For further information:**

Desley Casey

Consumer Activity Network (Mental Health) Inc. PO Box 555, Balgowlah NSW 2093

**Phone:** 02 9949 7242

**E-Mail:** [activeconsumer@optusnet.com.au](mailto:activeconsumer@optusnet.com.au)

**Web Site:** [http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/events/20051207\\_1261.html](http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/events/20051207_1261.html)

**Lock 'Them' Up? Disability & Mental Illness Aren't Crimes Conference**

17th-19th May 2006

Mecure Hotel

Brisbane, Australia

**Conference Themes:**

- What's the Cause? Why are so many people with intellectual disability/mental illness criminalised?
- Social Inclusion & Alternatives to Prison
- Support & Services in the Criminal Justice System - pre/post release services; arrest; prisons.
- History Culture

**Keynote Speakers**

Kevin Cocks

Helen Conner

Merinda Epstein

Debbie Killroy

Rhonda Galbally

Susan Hayes

Linda Holt

Kim Pate

Chris Puplick

For more information see: <http://www.sistersinside.com.au/conference2006.htm>

**Emotional Compass: Navigating Wellbeing**

41st Congress of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

28 - 31 May 2006

Perth Convention Exhibition Centre.

For further information see: [www.meetingplanners.com.au/ranzcp2006/](http://www.meetingplanners.com.au/ranzcp2006/).

**August 2006**

**Turning the Corner in Schizophrenia Research? 150 YEARS ON...  
9<sup>th</sup> Australian Schizophrenia Conference**

Fremantle, Western Australia

21-23 August 2006

Keynote speakers :

- Prof Richard Warner (US) - Outcomes in schizophrenia, as well as on first episode psychosis and early intervention

- Dr R Thara (India) - Third world outcomes in psychosis

- Prof Michele Tansella (Italy) - Italian "state of the art" service delivery models
- Prof Robin Murray (UK) - Cannabis use in psychosis
- Prof Assen Jablensky (Australia) - Genetics and neurocognition in schizophrenia

This is a biennial meeting attracting schizophrenia researchers throughout the Australasian region. Delegates attending the conference include: researchers and clinicians (psychiatrists, general practitioners, psychologists, neuroscientists, community mental health professionals); community support services; non-government organisations; consumers, carers, advocates and families. For the first time in 2006, the conference convenors are targeting areas in the Asia-Pacific region that have not been closely involved in previous conferences. The scientific program for ASC 2006 is designed to give rise to new synergies with the potential for developing novel approaches to old problems.

**Contact name:** Conference Secretariat

**E-mail:** asc2006@debretts.com.au

### Call for Papers

## Health Outcomes 2006: Managing Health and Disease in Today's Society

12th Annual National Conference

9 - 10 August 2006, Rydges Lakeside, Canberra

### CALL FOR PAPERS

For the 2006 conference we invite submissions for papers addressing health outcomes evaluation in the following areas:

- assessing health outcomes in the National Health Priority Areas (arthritis, asthma, cancer, CVD, diabetes, injury and mental health);
- chronic disease management, including comorbidity and palliative care, and conditions associated with ageing, such as dementia and aged care provision;
- equity, access and determinants of health and social policy - particularly in relation to (a) health promotion and preventative health initiatives, and (b) strategies for managing resources for the future;
- new directions and methodological issues in research, design and application of tools for assessing aspects of individual health (e.g. symptoms, function, health-related quality of life, needs, satisfaction);
- innovative and experimental approaches to health outcomes measurement more generally - particularly in program implementation and clinical practice, clinical benchmarking, and analyses and applications of comparative data;
- use of information and communication technologies to drive improvement in health service provision and research, including use of data sets and data linkage in outcomes evaluation and health assessment;
- population health, burden of disease, health differentials and inequalities, and health programs and issues for particular population groups. We encourage papers on Indigenous health outcomes;
- evidence-based approaches in general practice, primary and community care, allied health, the nursing sector and dental care;
- hospital quality, safety and clinical pathways;
- economic modelling and evaluation in relation to population health policy and practice; and
- consumer participation in developing health outcomes research, applied projects and programs.

Abstracts are required by 10 March 2006 to ensure consideration by the conference selection committee. Final papers and associated PowerPoint presentations are required by 30 June 2006, and must be written as for journal publication. Poster abstracts should be submitted by 24 March 2006 to ensure inclusion in scheduling, but the selection committee may consider later submissions for poster presentations.

Details of requirements are available at [www.uow.edu.au/commerce/ahoc](http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/ahoc) or contact:

Australian Health Outcomes Collaboration

Michael Partridge

Email: [michael.partridge@act.gov.au](mailto:michael.partridge@act.gov.au)

Tel: (+61) 02 6205 0869

Fax: (+61) 02 6244 4201

Jan Sansoni

Email: [jansan@netspeed.com.au](mailto:jansan@netspeed.com.au)

Tel: (+61) 02 6291 7271

Fax: (+61) 02 6244 4201