



# NEWSLETTER

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**MHCA Newsletter is published by:**

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**MHCA CEO:**

Dr Grace Groom

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## CEO's Report

The final MHCA/HREOC community consultation for 2004 was held in North Parramatta, Sydney on October 14. This last forum was held specifically to provide people from non-English speaking backgrounds an opportunity to comment on their experiences with the system of mental health care in Australia. October 15 was the final date for lodgement of submissions.

A total of 20 Forums have been held over the past 3 months. These forums have covered rural and metropolitan communities in each State and Territory. Only one forum was held in Tasmania but in all other States a minimum of 2 forums was held. Three forums were conducted in WA and four in both NSW and Victoria. Altogether, approximately 1,170 people have attended these forums. Many who attended spoke openly about their difficulties in seeking, receiving or delivering care. Others, such as police officers and supported accommodation providers have spoken about their challenging experiences in trying to support people with a mental illness. More than 300 formal submissions have been received from individuals and organisations. An overwhelming number of submissions have come from parents who have lost a child to suicide. A number of one-to-one interviews have been conducted with senior psychiatrists who wished to provide evidence but did not wish to

be identified. The fear of being publicly critical has been a common concern for service providers.

With so much data before the Council and HREOC the decision has been taken to revise the initial plan to release the final report by the end of 2004. The final report will now be released in early March 2005. Some important processes that will occur prior to the report's release include consultation with the Minister for Health and the Director of Mental Health in each of the States and Territories. This consultation will enable each Minister and Director to respond to the draft report for their respective State/Territory and put forward their views.

There is no doubt that the collective efforts of the Council and the Human Rights Commission have helped place mental health squarely on the political agenda. The unprecedented move by both major parties to launch a mental health policy position during the election is evidence of politicians' increasing awareness of the critical issues facing the mental health sector and the urgent need for focussed national leadership to stem the current crisis and avoid further tragedies and human rights abuses occurring.

There is no doubt that Trish Worth also played a key role in ensuring the Federal Government made a strong commitment to mental health during the election. Trish has been a true champion for mental health and drug and alcohol reform in Australia during her time as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health. Her commitment, drive and passion for reform will be sorely missed by us all at the MHCA and we wish her all the very best for her life beyond politics.

## **Recent Events**

### **World Mental Health Day 2004**

Dr Sev Ozdowski, Human Rights Commissioner, Ms Jessica Rowe, Channel Ten Celebrity and Mr Robin Bell, Australian Olympian, led a community walk to promote the benefits of exercise for mental health on World Mental Health Day 10 October 2004.

Over 100 people including media personalities, athletes, and other interested people participated in the 'Strengthen Your Mental Muscle Walk' around Centennial Park's Busby pond at 10am on Sunday 10 October during the ParkFest celebrations. After the walk, Ms Jessica Rowe, Patron of MHCA, officially launched World Mental Health Day which this year focuses on the important relationship between mental and physical health. Guest speakers included Dr Sev Ozdowski, Human Rights Commissioner and Acting Disability Rights Commissioner, Dr Rob Walters, Chair of Australian Divisions of General Practice, Mr Robin Bell, Australian and AIS Athlete and Mr Keith Mahar, Mental Health Consumer.

The launch was followed by family activities organised by the Mental Health Association NSW Inc and the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative signature event called ParkFest.

An additional 28 community forums were held throughout Australia as part of the WMHD and National mental health week celebrations of 2004. Of these 28 forums, 15 forums were directly coordinated by the MHCA and 13 forums coordinated by ADGP as the project partners.

The promotional material looked exceptional this year and accordingly was snapped up very quickly by those in Centennial Park! The launch was a great success.

## ▪ Upcoming Meetings/Events

### **Stop the silence that surrounds eating disorders and mental illnesses – readMylips**

Readmylips is a performance which provides an exploration of eating disorders, depression and mental illness in young people.

*“Eating disorders affect so many people in society yet no one talks about them. I wrote this play to change that. As an actor and writer I experience the empathic power of theatre everyday, I wanted to share this with every one.”*  
Georgia Van Cuylenburg – Writer.

Where: Kaleide Theatre Building 8 at  
RMIT Swanston St Melbourne (next to Commonwealth Bank)  
When: 7pm Friday 29<sup>th</sup> of October  
Cost \$10  
RSVP [readmylips@yahoo.com.au](mailto:readmylips@yahoo.com.au) or 0404 832 524 by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>  
October

readMylips ...is supported by the Butterfly Foundation who aim to provide direct relief to Australian suffers of eating disorders and their carers. For more information on the Butterfly Foundation please visit [www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au).

## **National Health Information Summit, Sofitel Melbourne, 6-7 December 2004**

### *TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH SYSTEM*

Information is a critical enabler of safe, high quality health care. In Australia, we are at a pivotal point as health information and communication technologies present new opportunities and streamline the way we deliver and manage health care.

The Australian Health Information Council and the National Health Information Group work together to bring a national focus to the health information agenda. In December, in collaboration with the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care, they will co-host the inaugural National Health Information Summit, a two day conference that will explore key themes and priorities for information and communications technology in Australia's health sector. The Summit themes include:

- The evolution of health IM&ICT as an integral part of appropriate health care delivery;
- Improving patient safety and the quality of health care through IM&ICT;
- Empowering consumers and transforming the patient-clinician relationship;
- Australia's electronic health records network;
- Health IM&ICT for public health and population research; and
- Building the IM&ICT capacity of the health workforce.

The Summit will offer a stimulating program, giving participants the opportunity to expand their knowledge, engage in thoughtful discussion and exchange ideas. Participants will have the opportunity to take part in a demonstration of the national electronic health record system, HealthConnect, and experience a hypothetical moderated by Dr Norman Swan, ABC Radio National health reporter.

The Summit will be presented by a diverse range of pre-eminent experts who are leading research and development in the field of health information management and information and communications technology (IM&ICT) both in Australia and overseas.

Speakers include public, private and community sector representatives, as well as health care providers and consumers, and information users such as researchers and policy makers. Some of the key speakers include:

- Mr Richard Alvarez, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canada Health Infoway;
- Professor Fiona Stanley AC, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth;
- Professor Chirs Baggoley, Chair, National Institute of Clinical Studies;
- Professor Andrew Coats, Chair, Australian Health Information Council, Dean, School of Medicine, University of Sydney;
- Ms Patricia Faulkner, Chair, National Health Information Group, Secretary, Department of Human Services, Victoria;
- Professor Bruce Barraclough, Chair, Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care;
- Dr Robert Wooding, First Assistant Secretary, Information and Communications Division, Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

After the Summit, participants will be the first to receive the National Health IM&ICT Strategy and the Health Workforce, Health Informatics Capacity Building Statement.

The Summit will be held at the Sofitel Melbourne from 6-7 December 2004. For more information or to register as a participant please visit the Summit website at [www.ahic.org.au/2004summit](http://www.ahic.org.au/2004summit).

The MHCA Newsletter is a forum to provide information to people interested in mental health matters in Australia. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to the Australian mental health sector. Please contact the MHCA on 6285 3100 or [admin@mhca.com.au](mailto:admin@mhca.com.au). Some articles published within the MHCA Newsletter are provided by third parties and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the MHCA. [Home](#)