

Carers Engagement Project



The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) will work with mental health carers throughout Australia in early 2008 through its Carers Engagement Project.

Aim

The aim of the Project is to:

- hear and record the real life experiences of mental health carers
- encourage carers to identify their current and future information needs
- provide a method of ongoing monitoring of carers' experiences by the MHCA

Project

MHCA will deliver workshops that will provide opportunities for family members and carers of a person with a mental illness to further develop their coping and management skills.

There will be specific workshops for carers who are Indigenous, from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and young carers.

The Project will include 40 one-day workshops, which will provide an empowering experience where mental health carers will not only have the opportunity to share and learn but also provide the MHCA with information of relevance to advance the issue and needs of mental health carers in Australia at the national level. MHCA will use the experiences and information discussed at the workshops to advocate for better outcomes for mental health carers through the development of an annual snapshot of carers' experiences. This snapshot will be used to demonstrate over time any improvements for mental health carers as well as the areas that still need work.

In the past the MHCA has brought the issues of mental health care to national attention in such documents as the '*Out of Hospital Out of Mind*' report of 2003 and the '*Not for Service*' report 2005. (both available on the MHCA website available at <http://www.mhca.org.au>.)

Workshop Distribution

The MHCA will host twenty workshops for mental health carers in major urban areas, ten in regional centres and ten in more rural and remote settings. A minimum of four workshops will be held in each state and territory covering one of each of the above areas.

Participants

The MHCA invites mental health carers from all backgrounds and all areas. The wider the experience of participants the more diverse carer experiences will be heard and used in national advocacy to improve policy initiatives for carers.

Workshop Content

The four key aspects to the workshops include an opportunity to:

- legitimise and validate the experience of mental health caring
- identify key issues in mental health service provision from a carer perspective
- gain information about the role of mental health carers and available supports
- engage in monitoring and reporting the carer experience of service provision to individuals and families experiencing mental health issues

To discuss the possibility of the MHCA working with you or your local organisation to hold a workshop in your area or for any further information, please contact Linda Rosie, Project Manager, Carers Engagement Project tel: (02) 6285 3100, email: linda.rosie@MHCA.org.au (Monday to Wednesday).

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