



MENTAL HEALTH
**carers
voice**

Leading change and action with, and for, mental health Carers

5 April 2013

E-Bulletin



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Mental Health Carers Voice

Mental Health Carers Voice policy officer's report

Carers ACT will be presenting on *Opening Minds*, Mental Illness Education ACT's (MIEACT) radio program on **Tuesday, 23 April, 6.00pm – 6.30pm**. Doris Kordes will be talking to a carer who is also a carer representative and a MIEACT community educator. For more information about *Opening Minds* visit the MIEACT website at <http://www.mieact.org.au/>. *Opening Minds* is devised, run and operated by a team of volunteers, and features on community radio 2XX 98.3FM every Tuesday night from 6.00pm – 6.30pm.

The neurological condition of epilepsy has historically been associated with mental illness. For example, similar to the folklore associated with mental illness, it was believed that a full moon could bring on an epileptic seizure. People living with epilepsy may also experience stigma. To mark Purple Month for epilepsy awareness, Emma Renwick, a senior reporter in ABC TV's Sydney newsroom, spoke of her lived experience of epilepsy, both as a consumer and a carer. [Click here to read Emma Renwick's article](#). If you wish to find out more information about epilepsy, contact Epilepsy Australia ACT on 6287 4555 or view the website at <http://www.epilepsyact.org.au/index.htm>. All donations to Epilepsy Australia are tax deductible.

Last year, inside out & associates Australia and the Social Policy Research Centre, University of NSW organised the Care without Coercion conference. It was a stimulating, thought-provoking conference, and the papers will shortly be made available on the inside out & associates website. In the meantime, Mary O'Hagan's video, specially created for the conference, is available here. <http://www.insideoutconversations.com.au/>. Ms O'Hagan is one of the foremost leaders in recovery and is also a New Zealand Mental Health Commissioner. This futuristic radio interview presents a vision for care without coercion in 2042.

At the March Quarterly Community Forum hosted by the Mental Health Community Coalition ACT, several carers mentioned that they were unaware of the existence of the Consumer and Carer Caucus, a group mechanism for ensuring the voices, opinions and concerns of consumers and carers are not only heard but also enabled to inform the work of the Coalition. Notes from the March Forum are now available (see below). Also promoted in this issue of E-Bulletin is an invitation to the next Consumer and Carer Caucus meeting (see below), on **Wednesday 17 April 2013, 12.00 – 2pm, Griffin Centre, Canberra City, MHCC meeting room, level 1.**

All mental health carers are encouraged to participate in this innovative group, described in review findings as follows:

The conceptualization of Caucus was a bold and profoundly political act: essentially it is about power and trying to ensure that the historically powerless are heard in a comfortable yet professional setting.

Click here to [download a copy of the 2009 Review of the Consumer and Carer Caucus.](#)

Doris Kordes

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Mental Health First Aid Training for Carers

Dates: Thursdays 23 and 30 May, 6 and 13 June
Time: 1.00pm – 4.00pm
Location: Carers ACT, 80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt
Cost: Free to current mental health carers living in the ACT.

This is a wonderful training opportunity for mental health carers. Len Kanowski, an experienced clinician, will be delivering the training to carers free of charge. Participants will be awarded a certificate of completion. It is therefore vital that you are able to commit to attending on each of the four, three hour sessions. Places are limited to 16 participants, so if you wish to undertake the training please reserve your place as soon as possible by phoning Rosie on 6299 9900 or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au.

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Mental Health Carers Networking and Consulting Forums

Second Exposure Draft, Mental Health (Treatment & Care) Act – 29 April

*** NOTE CHANGE OF DATE & VENUE.** The Second Exposure Draft Amendment Bill of the Mental Health (Treatment & Care) Act will be available for comment from April 2013. Carers ACT will be hosting a consultation with mental health carers.

Date: 29 April
Time: 12.00pm – 2.00pm
Location: Riley Hall, Pilgrim House Conference Centre, 69 Northbourne Avenue, Civic
Cost: Free. Lunch will be provided
RSVP: Phone Rosie on 6296 9900 or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au if you would like to attend.

Navigating the Mental Health System – Thursday 16 May

Knowledge about how to navigate the mental health system is a huge issue for people who have just entered the ‘system’, but also for those people who may be unaware of the diverse range of services and supports that are available for people living in Canberra. A panel of speakers comprising a mental health consumer and carer, and representatives from key mental health organisations, will share information and provide resources.

Date: Thursday 16 May
Time: 9.30 – 12.30pm
Location: Conference Room 1, Rex Hotel, 150 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon (parking available)
Cost: Free. Morning tea and a light lunch will be provided
RSVP: By 9 May. Phone Rosie on 6296 9900; or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au

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****WANTED** - Mental Health Carer Representatives**

The Mental Health Carers Voice Program is funded by the ACT Government for mental health carers to have a greater voice. Carer representatives are remunerated for their time and their expertise and in addition, receive a range of training and supports.

Currently, the Program has several vacancies for carer representative positions, and people with lived experience of being a mental health carer are invited to consider becoming a carer representative. If you are interested in participating, but would prefer to be a little less engaged, there are vacancies for alternate representatives for various committees. The alternate representative attends meetings when the carer representative cannot attend.

For more information about becoming a carer representative, phone Rosie Fisk on 6299 9900 or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au. More information is also available on the Mental Health Carers Voice website at www.carersvoice.com.au.

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Carers Corner: The Power of Silence - Schizophrenia

A carer has submitted the following story:

A recent finding in brain science reveals that the voices in a person's head can drown out voices in the real world. As a carer of a much loved son with schizophrenia, I agree. I had to learn that silence is a very powerful tool rather than my engaging in a one-way conversation with a son who remained largely mute.

What I did was remained silent myself. His response was: "*Is something wrong Mum?*" How powerful was this first step. I said "*No – I know you have a lot going on in your head right now – I'm fine*". We went about our business, him following his usual pattern of behaviour over a long period and me remaining very quiet. I talked so rarely, most times I spoke he listened. By doing much less talking I somehow gave the little that I did say a lot more weight.

Over time, with effective treatment and a change in my behaviour, he changed too. We started to meet on a different level – his world. My talking less grew to us talking more and what's more, our relationship flourished.

A carer has nothing to lose by keeping their mouth shut; when you do speak, punctuate with a very long pause; and use short sentences. Never attempt to give more than one message. When you have nothing to say, say nothing. Reassure him or her you're fine with a gentle smile.

Be patient. Your silence may pass on many messages; one is that you are present, not nobody. He or she may feel more secure and experience a new connection with you too. Silence is a powerful tool and it's worth the effort when you caring for someone special who lives with schizophrenia.

Carers may be interested in exploring the following research findings and resources relating to living with schizophrenia:

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/2006/helpful-hints-about-schizophrenia-for-family-members-and-others/>

<http://www.schizophrenia.com/family/60tip.html>

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/schizophrenia_helping_family_member.htm

<http://ana.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/Volume102005/No1Jan05/HirshArticle/LivingwithSchizophrenia.aspx>

Mental health carers are invited to respond to or submit articles for Carers Corner. Please contact Rosie Fisk by phone, on 6296 9900, or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au.

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ACT Carer Representative Report

Janet Milford - National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum

The document links below were developed by Dr Joe Parks (an award-winning American psychiatrist who was a guest speaker at ANU in 2012), who addresses medical guidelines and tests that people with mental health issues should follow for their physical health. They are a useful tool for mental health carers to provide to the Medical practitioner of the person they care for, to monitor physical as well as

mental health.

Medical practitioners and psychiatrists in the community are not effectively addressing the physical health of consumers. The National Mental Health Commission's 'A Contributing Life: the 2012 National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention' provides statistics comparing the physical health problems of those living with a mental illness with the health of those in the general population with no mental illness (pages 54 – 57).

It is not well known in Australian society that treatments with prescribed psychiatric drugs may lead to worse physical health such as diabetes. Over the last ten years across Australia and internationally, guidelines have recommended that people with severe mental illness have their physical health monitored on a regular basis. However, only two thirds of the 90% of people living with psychosis who visit a GP, have a general health check or a cardiovascular check. This is an area that needs much more attention. Click on the following links to download:

[Guidelines for medication monitoring](#)

[Health screening template](#)

[CMHCHCHS screening](#)

Janet Milford

Carers ACT News

Carers ACT new disability e-bulletin

Carers ACT have released a new e-bulletin to keep carers informed and up to date with the latest news about DisabilityCare Australia. [Click here to download the disability e-bulletin](#) and to subscribe.

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On Course for Carers

Create your own Life/Communication Book

Communication books or Life books are living, creative documents that have proven to be very useful tools for caring families. Life books can be functional or may tell a story. This series of practical workshops will provide the time, resources and support for carers to create a life book for themselves or the person they support. The course is presented by Annette at CIT Skills for Carers.

Date: Wednesdays 15, 19 May and 12 June (need to attend all)

Time: 10.00am – 2.00pm (lunch will be provided)

Bookings essential: To RSVP call Eleanor on 6296 9908 or email rsvp@carersact.org.au.

For suggestions on future topics, please email Marie at marie.falconer@carersact.org.au.

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Keeping Families Connected

The Keeping Families Connected group is a 5 week group run by Carers ACT for carers of family members with mental health and who may have alcohol and/or other drug dependencies. These groups have

been run for a number of years in varying formats and this year we invited Canberra's Indigenous community. A great deal of preparation and forethought went into this group as it was the first of its kind. It was hoped that this would be a gateway to the large number of mental health carers in the Indigenous community who are not connected to the services offered by Carers ACT (other than the Indigenous Respite Programme). The group warmly welcomed the well known and respected elder Rosemary Kudnarta Wanganen from South Australia who presented her model of the 'Seven Phases to Integrating Loss and Grief' - which addressed issues vital to the group in their roles as Indigenous carers. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, so it is hoped this will encourage more Indigenous carers to access our services.

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Mental Health Carer – Southside Support Group

This is a support group for family members and friends caring for someone living with mental health issues. The group meets on one Wednesday evening most months.

Date: 27 March, 24 April, 22 May, 26 June, 24 July, 28 August, 25 September, 23 October, 27 November

Time: 6.00pm – 8.00pm

Location: Woden Smith Family, Corner of Launceston & Easty Streets, Woden

For further information please call 1800 242 636 or email rsvp@carersact.org.au.

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Mental Health Carer – Northside Support Group

This is a support group for family members and friends caring for someone living with mental health issues. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month.

Date: 9 April, 14 May, 11 June (dates for second half of 2013 coming soon)

Time: 5.00pm – 7.00pm

Location: The Carers Hub, Carers ACT, 2/80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt

For further information please call 1800 242 636 or email rsvp@carersact.org.au.

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Mental Health Carers Respite — 1800 052 222

The Mental Health Respite Program provides flexible respite and other supports to meet the individual needs of carers of people with severe mental illness, autism or intellectual disabilities and their families. Services include respite options based on needs assessments, information and referral, links to education programs, counselling, peer support, advocacy services and social and recreational activities. Please call 1800 052 222 or email mentalhealth.respite@carersact.org.au. The Mental Health Respite program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs. For more information about supports available under this Program visit the Carers ACT [website](#).

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Counselling at Carers ACT — Supporting Family Carers — 1800 242 636

Did you know that Carers ACT can provide short-term counselling for family carers? Our counselling service can help you manage difficult situations and balance caring in your life. Qualified counsellors are located on site in Holt and Woden to provide carers with confidential and professional face-to-face and telephone counselling. Call the Carer Advisory Service to make an appointment 1800 242 636. Click here for more information on [support that Carers ACT counsellors can offer mental health carers](#).

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Free Tickets to combined Canberra Grammar Schools “Guys & Dolls” performance at Canberra Theatre

An opportunity for carers and their families to attend this free performance at the Canberra Theatre. Matinee Performance (Dress Rehearsal) of Guys and Dolls, presented by the combined Canberra Grammar Schools.

Date: Thursday 11 April 2013

Time: 12.30pm for a 1.00pm start

Location: Canberra Theatre Centre (People need to ask for the Duty Manager on arrival)

For your ticket please contact Rosie or Jessica on 6296 9900.

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ACT News

Mental Health Community Coalition ACT (MHCC)

Consumer and Carer Caucus

The ACT Consumer Carer Caucus is a forum for mental health consumers and carers in the ACT to meet, share information, form partnerships and be involved in the development and implementation of mental health reform.

The next meeting of the ACT Consumer Carer Caucus will be held on **Wednesday 17 April 2013, 12.00pm – 2.00pm, Griffin Centre, Canberra City, MHCC meeting room, level 1**. Lunch will be served as usual, so RSVPs are appreciated.

Caucus is currently in the process of re-inventing the way it goes about doing its business to ensure participation in Caucus is meaningful and relevant to consumers and carers in the ACT. This forms a part of a larger project in MHCC to evaluate and reinvent its consumer and carer participation processes.

The main item for discussion at the next meeting therefore remains how to implement the new way of doing Caucus business. If there is anything else you would like to discuss, please let Simon know on simon.viereck@mhccact.org.au or phone 6249 7756, or simply bring your issue to the meeting. For more information see the [MHCC website](#).

Report on MHCC ACT Community MH Sector Workshops

In September 2012, the Board of the Mental Health Community Coalition (MHCC) endorsed a community mental health sector wide development strategy. A new approach to sector development was deemed necessary because a number of significant drivers of change, including:

- The ACT Government's decision to ramp up community sector reform partly as a result of the equal remuneration case
- The impending establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and its potential impact on service delivery
- The increasing costs of compliance and the requirement to provide quality services, and to be reporting against the National Standards for Mental Health Services
- The Review of the ACT Community Sector of Mental Health Services (May 2011) that also called for significant reform of the sector.

MHCC decided to begin the change process with three half-day workshops. The three half day workshops were held in February and early March. Workshop participants included representatives of community managed mental health services in the ACT, people with a lived experience of mental illness, mental health carers, representatives of the ACT Health Directorate, the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network, Carers ACT, and other community organisations.

The overall objectives for the workshops were to:

- To develop a vision and future direction for the Mental Health Sector in the ACT
- To set the framework for Workshop 3 in developing an implementation plan for reform in the mental health sector and key questions around actions.

These workshops should be seen as just the start of an ongoing process of sector development.

A full report from the workshops will be available on the [MHCC website](#) in the next few days.

Notes from MHCCACT March Quarterly Community Forum

In late March MHCC, the ACT MHCN, Carers ACT, and Mental Health, Justice Health, Alcohol and Drug Services invited the sector to a quarterly community forum to discuss The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and MHCC consumer and carer participation. Wendy Kipling from the ACT NDIS Taskforce gave an update on the progress preparing for implementation of the enhanced service offer. Wendy also started the difficult conversation about how the NDIS is going to influence the local ACT community.

Ian Rentsch, David Lovegrove and Doris Kordes spoke about consumer and carer engagement and participation at MHCC. During discussion some interesting points were raised about how to engage consumers and carers in a meaningful way. MHCC will now develop Terms of Reference and project planning. Also four second year masters in social work students, who are currently doing a community development unit, are offering their help for a limited time period.

Please find attached the notes from the forum. You can also download the notes from the MHCC website by [clicking here](#). For further information please contact Simon Viereck via email on simon.viereck@mhccact.org.au.

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National Disability Insurance Scheme update 38

The launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, DisabilityCare Australia, is just a few months away in launch sites, excluding the ACT site which commences in July 2014. It's vital that people with

disability, their families and carers keep providing their input during this final stage before the start of the scheme. There is a [new online Your Say forum](#) to seek your views on how the NDIS can support people with disability who are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. [Click here to read more.](#)

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Common Ground Canberra – supported accommodation newsletter

Click [here to read the latest news and information about Common Ground Canberra.](#)

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Carers Skills at CIT

Medical Emergencies – a session for family carers

This session provides practical information relating to emergency situations of particular concerns to carers, things that can happen at home or when you are out and about, such as choking, seizures, CPR, burns, falls, poisoning and cuts. Note: this is not an accredited first aid course. Facilitator Lyn Kennedy is an experienced first aid trainer and CIT teacher.

Date: Wednesday 8 May

Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Location: DISH (Disability Information Support Hub) meeting room, Oatley Court,
Belconnen

Cost: Free

To Register phone 6207 3628 or email CarerSkills@cit.edu.au

Supporting someone with Depression – a short course for family carers

These sessions are designed to provide information about depression and available supports as well as an opportunity to better understand and deal with the issues and challenges that arise when someone you love is depressed. It is also a chance to meet other people in similar situations and explore ways to keep going. Facilitator Jenny Thompson has worked in the Canberra community for over 25 years as a psychologist, counsellor and trainer.

Dates: 3 sessions (Thursdays) – 23, 30 May, 6 June

Time: 2.00pm – 5.00pm

Venue: CIT Woden, 160 Ainsworth Street, Phillip

Cost: Free

To Register phone 6207 3628 or email CarerSkills@cit.edu.au

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Work Ready Program

An initiative of MI Fellowship and Capital Careers, the Work Ready Program is aimed at jobseekers experiencing disadvantage including people with a mental illness. The training covers skills such as using computers, safe manual handling, customer service and business that will help prepare jobseekers to gain employment. Click here [for a flyer](#), click here for the [registration form](#) and click here for [the](#)

[eligibility declaration form](#).

Date: Tuesdays and Fridays 23 April – 21 June

Time: 9.30am – 3.30pm

Cost: Free for eligible jobseekers

For more information contact Michelle Russell on 6246 7104 or Ros Williams at Capital Careers on 6253 0682.

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LivingWorks Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

ASIST is presented by Lifeline Canberra. ASIST is a two-day interactive workshop which aims to improve participants' suicide awareness and prevention skills. The course is presented by LivingWorks-accredited facilitators, who use internationally standardised resources and materials. Participants are trained to recognise when a person may be at risk and how to respond to improve the immediate and long-term safety of the person at risk. After completing the course, participants will be able to:

- recognise the warning signs
- discuss suicide with a person at risk in a direct manner
- develop a 'safeplan' for people at risk
- help the person to keep themselves safe!

Date: 18 and 19 April

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

For further information or to download the registration form, visit www.act.lifeline.org.au, phone 6204 6402 or email training@act.lifeline.org.au.

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Accidental Counsellor Training

The Accidental Counsellor course is presented by Lifeline Canberra. Accidental Counsellor is a two-day workshop that provides participants with fundamental skills in crisis support counselling and dealing with difficult clients and situations. The course also covers topics such as dealing with people who are angry, highly distressed, or experiencing effects of a mental illness.

Participants learn the value of self-care, and strategies they can employ both at work and in their personal life to ensure their mental and physical wellbeing remains at an optimum level. Participants receive a workbook which they can refer to later to refresh the skills and knowledge gained from the course. The training runs over two days. After completing the course, participants will:

- have an understanding of and be able to demonstrate active listening skills
- understand the foundations of developing and maintaining effective and productive relationships with their clients
- be able to deal appropriately with difficult clients.

Date: 11 and 12 April or 24 and 26 April or 30 and 31 May

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

Cost: The standard rate for the Accidental Counsellor course is \$400 per participant, or \$360 per participant for not-for-profit organisations and pension card holders.

For further information or to download the registration form, visit www.act.lifeline.org.au, phone 6204 6402 or email training@act.lifeline.org.au.

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National & International News and Research

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare : Mental Health Services in Australia

New information in the following areas of the AIHW website has been added:

- Expenditure on mental health services
- Specialised mental health facilities
- Summary jurisdictional tables

These updated sections are available on the [Mental Health Services Australia website](#). Click here to read an accompanying [media release](#).

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National Mental Health Consumer Organisation frequently asked questions

The national Mental Health Consumer Organisation has a new page on their website with frequently asked questions. [Click here to access the new page](#).

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New website for Partners in Depression

Partners in Depression is an education and support group program for people who love, live with or care for someone experiencing depression. They have launched a new website with information for professionals and the community. View the new [website](#).

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Can we talk...about mental illness and suicide? National Mental Health Commission releases report

Can we talk...about mental illness and suicide? is the first Spotlight Report to be released by the National Mental Health Commission in 2013. The report is a snapshot of public opinion gathered from the conversations of everyday Australians about mental illness and suicide. National Mental Health Commissioner Janet Meagher says the study reinforces that while we have stories to tell, we are still struggling to make sense of mental illness and suicide. Read the report and the media release [here](#).

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2013 National Mental Health Report Card themes announced

The National Mental Health Commission has announced its focus topics for the 2013 Report Card will be:

- Thriving, not just surviving: One person, diverse needs: living with a mental illness as well as the challenges from difficulties with alcohol and drug use
- Connections with family, friends, culture and community: Strengthening community understanding
- Ensuring effective support, care and treatment: Approaches that support recovery, including through peer support
- Something meaningful to do, something to look forward to: Transitioning from education to independence
- Feeling safe, stable and secure: The justice system and mental health
- Preventing suicide: What works in suicide prevention?

Find out more about the 2013 Report Card [here](#) or view the [2012 Report Card](#).

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Recovery Orientated Language Guide

The NSW Mental Health Coordinating Council has developed a *Recovery Orientated Language Guide* because language matters in mental health. We must use words that convey hope and optimism and that support, and promote a culture that supports, recovery. [The guide can be downloaded here](#).

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Inaugural Australian College of Mental Health Nurses International Online Research Symposium (Online Conference)

An online Symposium or Conference is just like any other Symposium or Conference – except, instead of holding it in some exotic location, people can attend from home or work by using a computer.

A focus of the Symposium is partnership and collaboration – between carers, consumers, managers, practitioners, services, organisations and institutions. Another focus is the collaboration and partnerships in research that occurs between people located across the globe. [Click here to further information and to register for the ACMHN Online Symposium](#).

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In the media

- [States sign off on Homelessness Agreement](#)
- [Being kind makes you happier than chocolate](#)
- [New study will try to save lives by better understanding suicide](#)
- [Mental Health spending rises to \\$6.9 billion in 2010 – 2011 \(- AIHW\)](#)
- [Mental Health Research gets \\$10 million boost](#)
- [Australia's mental illness victims treated dismally, says Allan Fels](#)
- [Battle scars: Fighting the ADF's warrior culture on mental health](#)
- [Australian schools 'facing psychological health crisis'](#)
- [Time to address student mental health](#)
- [Mental health warning for life post-Afghanistan](#)
- [New psychiatric diagnostic guidelines lead to fear of over-diagnosis](#)

- [The mother who never does anything](#)
- [Australian researchers find epilepsy gene](#)
- [DisabilityCare: a bad name but a good direction](#)
- [Justice should aim to make lives better](#)
- [Health survey shows we are keeping an eye on our health](#)
- [Social isolation, not just feeling lonely, may shorten lives](#)

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If you or someone you know may be at risk of suicide contact Lifeline 131 114, beyondblue 1300 224 636, or Salvo Care Line 1300 363 622.

The opinions expressed in this E Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of Carers ACT.

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