



12 December 2012

E-Bulletin

End of year message

It has been a huge year for mental health in the ACT beginning and ending the year with the Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform. Thank you for your support for the Carers Voice program over the year, and your contributions to our mental health policy work. While there is still much to do in the coming year – particularly around the revised Mental Health ACT, I hope you have a restful and peaceful seasonal break and I look forward to pushing the mental health agenda for carers once more in the new year. All the best for a terrific 2013.

Dee McGrath
Carers ACT CEO

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Mental Health Carers Voice – Policy Officer Report

At its November AGM, the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT hosted a presentation by Professor Kathy Griffiths from the Centre for Mental Health Research (CMHR), ANU regarding the online *Self-Help Programs for Mental Health & Wellbeing*. The CMHR has developed five innovative online self-help services for people living with anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder that can be accessed anonymously and free of charge, 24 hours a day, from anywhere. These programs have been evaluated, and the results are positive. To read the flyer, click [here](#); to access the website click [here](#).

On 5 December 2012, Anndey Ho, Carers ACT CALD Program Coordinator and Doris Kordes, Mental Health Carers Voice Policy Officer, attended the Consumer Health Forum (CHF) workshop on **Medicines Issues faced by Carers**. CHF has been funded by National Prescribing Service (NPS) *Medicinewise* to consult with carers on medicines issues. The safe and effective use of medicines ('Quality Use of Medicines') is an important topic: more than 1.5 million Australians experience adverse medicines events each year. An information paper prepared by CHF, with questions for carers, may be accessed [here](#).

This project provides carers with a great opportunity to have their voices heard. Interested carers can contact Mr Carlo Malaca, Project and Communications Officer at c.malaca@chf.org.au or 6273 5444. Carlo is happy to extend the closing date of 14 December (comments on questions raised in the information paper) to 19 December 2012. Further information about CHF's Community Quality Use of Medicines and Medical Tests Project can be found on the CHF website www.chf.org.au. For more information about NPS Medicinewise, click [here](#).

The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform, 2012-2022 was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments on 7 December 2012. It is pleasing to note that carers are recognised throughout the Roadmap, and each of the key priority areas includes strategies that identify and affirm the role of carers and families in general. Click [here](#) to read an extract (prepared by the MHCV Policy Officer) that may be of interest to mental health carers.

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New Carer Representatives

Two carers have joined the Mental Health Carers Voice program.

- Shirley Pipitone is the new carer representative for the Clinical Effectiveness Committee at the Adult Mental Health Unit. Shirley is also a carer representative on the Board of the Mental Health Community Coalition of the ACT. To read Shirley's profile please click [here](#).
- Silvia Sharp Page is the new carer representative for the MHJHADS Consumer and Carer Feedback Committee at the Adult Mental Health Unit.

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VACANCIES for Mental Health Carers living in the ACT

The Mental Health Carers Voice program currently has vacancies for mental health carers on committees and working groups as carer representatives, as follows:

Division of Mental Health, Justice Health and Alcohol & Drug Services (MHJHADS)

- Risk Management
- Community smoke-free working group
- MHAGIC (Mental Health Assessment Generation Information Collection) Advisory Committee

MHJHADS Redesign Projects

- Web-based bed tool and cross-divisional bed management
- Alexander Maconochie Centre Medication Management
- Steering Committee for all six projects

If you are interested in participating, but would prefer to be a little less engaged, we are also looking for alternate representatives for various committees. The alternate representative attends meetings when the carer representative cannot attend. If you would like to access the current list of committees please click [here](#). For more information, please contact Rosie Fisk on 6299 9900 or email mhcarers@carersact.org.au.

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Mental Health Carers Voice Online Discussion Forum

If you are a mental health carer, you are invited to comment, question, or add your voice to any discussion topics that appeal to you. The Mental Health Carers Voice Online Discussion Forum is a moderated forum. This means that it will take a little while for your posts to appear. Don't worry about this. So long as they follow our simple guidelines, they will appear.

To go to the Carers Voice Discussion Forum, click [here](#). To read the Discussion Forum Guidelines, click [here](#).

You may wish to keep an eye out for the draft Carers ACT Position Statement on the Smoke-Free Policy, which will shortly be published on the Forum. Mental health carers will be invited to provide comments on the Position Statement.

NB. All information given on the Discussion Forum is opinion and lived experience. Carers ACT cannot vouch for, nor be held responsible for, its accuracy.

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Carers ACT

The Cottage and Fraser House closing and opening dates for Christmas 2012

Fraser House is closing on 21 December 2012 at 4.00pm and reopens on 2 January 2013 at 9.00am.

The Cottage is closing on the 23 December 2012 at 9.00am and reopens on 2 January 2013 at 9.00am.

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Who Cares – Carers’ Walking Group

This weekly walking group is being organised by a group of carers. The group heads off around 10.15am for a 30-45 minute walk then has coffee and a chat afterwards.

Dates: Friday mornings

Time: Meet at 10.00am for a 10.15am start

Location: Carers ACT, 80 Beaufort Crescent, Holt

Further information: rsvp@carersact.org.au or call Eleanor on 6296 9908.

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Mental Health Carers Respite - 1800 052 222

The Mental Health Carers 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

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On Course for Carers – February to April 2013

On Course for Carers monthly information sessions support carers in their caring role. For the calendar of courses between February and April 2013, click [here](#).

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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.

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ACT News

The new Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Centralised Booking Service commencing 10 December 2012

The new number for all WAT bookings and inquiries in the ACT from Monday is 13WATS or 13 92 87. This is a 24 hour, 7 day a week WAT booking service. WAT passengers who wish to retain or request their regular driver can also do this through the new booking service.

A WAT infoline for complaints, compliments, lost property or general inquiries is open between 8.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday on 6280 4123.

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Rainbow Christmas Party Lunch and Activities

Rainbow is having a Christmas Party lunch with activities, to share a special Christmas meal and have some fun before we break for Christmas holidays. Members of the mental health community including consumers, carers, workers, family and friends are welcome.

Date: Wednesday 19 December

Time: 12.00pm

Location: Rainbow, H Block Canberra Technology Park, 49 Phillip Avenue, Watson

Cost: \$20 per person

RSVP: By Friday 14 December by phone 6242 6575 or email rainbow@mhf.org.au. Cash payment in advance is much appreciated but payment on the day is also possible.

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2013 CONTACT Community Services Directory

The new PINK Canberra Centenary edition of the CONTACT Directory is now available for \$16.50. To order the publication you can visit the website www.citizensadvice.org.au and process the order online or you can pick up one at the shopfront in the Griffin Centre. There is also the CONTACT directory available on CD for \$25.00 (single user) or \$50.00 (multi user). Don't miss out on getting your hands on the ACT region's most comprehensive listing of community services.

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Mental Health Justice Health Alcohol and Drugs Services Smoke Free Newsletter

To read the December Smoke Free Newsletter click [here](#).

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Lifeline Canberra's Training Events 2013

1. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)

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 through Lifeline, 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.

Date: 14 and 15 February

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

2. Accidental Counsellor

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.

Enrol two participants in an Accidental Counsellor course in February 2013 for only \$600.

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

Date: 7 and 8 February or 21 and 22 February

Time: 9.00am – 5.00pm

For further information on these courses or to download a registration form, please visit

www.act.lifeline.org.au or contact the Lifeline Canberra Training team on 6247 0655 or

email training@act.lifeline.org.au

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PANDSI programs in 2013

PANDSI Holiday Playgroup is an informal group for women and their families affected by Post or Ante Natal Depression. This group provides a safe and understanding environment where a support worker is available to chat and new friends can be made.

Date: Tuesday 8, 15, 22 and 29 January

Time: 10.00am to 12.00pm

Other groups:

Day Support Group – Tuesday's PUMP (Promoting Ultimate Maternal Potential) Support Group

Thursday's YES! (Yoga Evening Support) Support Group

Tuesday evenings (priority to Mum's who are working/studying or pregnant)

Feel free to refer clients who have or may have post natal depression/anxiety to speak to one of our Support Workers on 6288 1936. Post & Ante Natal Depression Support & Information (Monday -

Thursday 9.00am to 2.30pm) www.pandsi.org

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National News and Research

Mental Health Sector calls COAG to Action

The mental health sector has united in its call on the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to renew its joint commitment to Australia's mental health by setting real and measurable targets for national mental health reform. The organisations fear that without real and measurable targets, the promised Ten year Roadmap for Mental Health will fall well short of what the recent *National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention* suggests Australia needs to support what it calls 'a contributing life' for those who experience mental illness. "We can't let the publication of the country's first National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention pass without government commitment," said Mr Frank Quinlan, CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia. Read the full media release [here](#) and you can read the Open Letter to COAG signed by many organisations, [here](#).

COAG endorse the Mental Health Reform Road Map

COAG has released the *Ten year Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform* and re-affirmed its commitment to mental health reform. To access the Roadmap, click [here](#).

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Mental Health Council of Australia's E-Bulletin

The Mental Health Council of Australia put together a special e-bulletin highlighting media releases on the launch of the MHCA's *Recognition and Respect: Mental Health Carers Report 2012* and *A Contributing Life: the 2012 National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention* from the National Mental Health Commission. To access the e-bulletin, click [here](#).

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New group guiding implementation of the National Carer Strategy

A new reference group guiding the implementation of the National Carer Strategy met for the first time in Canberra on 20 November 2012. The Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator Jan McLucas, said the National Carer Strategy Implementation Reference Group will provide ongoing advice to government on key areas of the Strategy's implementation.

"The Australian Government knows just how important the role of carers is in the lives of many Australians, and that's why we are supporting our country's 2.6 million carers," Senator McLucas said. Read more [here](#). Read a Communique of the meeting [here](#).

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Research: Dementia Carer Survey

Family carers of people living with dementia are invited to participate in a national survey as part of a research project conducted by La Trobe University. The project is investigating the factors that assist coping in dementia carers and how these factors impact on carer stress and health. Participation requires anonymous completion of the survey, which will take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete. The survey can be posted to you or you can complete the survey online:

[Click here to take the Dementia Carer Survey](#)

Participants are eligible to enter a draw to win a \$100 Coles Myer voucher. For further information or to request a copy of the survey please contact Project Investigator Linda McAuliffe on 03 9479 6006 or by email at l.mcauliffe@latrobe.edu.au. (La Trobe University Faculty Human Ethics Committee #FHEC11/R77). This project is funded by the Alzheimer's Australia Dementia Research Foundation and the Australian Government Dementia Collaborative Research Centre.

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New reference guides for health professionals treating young people with depression

Following the development of NHMRC-approved *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Depression in Adolescents and Young Adults in 2011*, beyondblue has produced several 'quick and easy' reference guides for busy health professionals. beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO said busy people such as doctors and psychologists don't have time to search a thick document for the information they need when they

have a young person with depression sitting in their clinic and needing help. Health professionals told us that the beyondblue Clinical Practice Guidelines are an excellent resource for in-depth research, but for use on a day-to-day basis they wanted the information in a more succinct and easily-accessible format. You can read the full media release [here](#) and download the Clinical Practice Guidelines [here](#).

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Ombudsman Inquiry: Denial of the rights of people with psychiatric disability

Many people are remaining in mental health facilities beyond the point at which they need to be there, says a report tabled in the NSW Parliament on 29 November 2012. In his report, *Denial of rights: the need to improve accommodation and support for people with psychiatric disability*, the NSW Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, highlights the barriers that currently prevent many people with psychiatric disability from moving out of mental health facilities and into the community. Read more [here](#).

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NSW Agreement on NDIS

The Federal and New South Wales Governments have reached an historic agreement that will allow for the full roll out of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in New South Wales by July 2018 ahead of last Friday's COAG meeting. The government says the agreement will provide care and support to around 140,000 NSW residents with significant disability, and provide coverage in the event of disability to around one third of the Australian population. Read more [here](#).

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A call for better access to Justice on International Day of People with Disability

On International Day of People with Disability, the Australian Human Rights Commission's Disability Discrimination and Social Justice Commissioners have renewed their call for a change in legislation to allow the courts to be more flexible in how they hear evidence in criminal cases involving people with disabilities. The limited research on the numbers of people with disability in the criminal justice system highlights that people with a cognitive or intellectual impairment are over-represented. In New South Wales, for example, at least 13 per cent of the prison population has an intellectual disability, which is almost five times the rate of the general population. Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes said, "It is important to have consistency across the country to protect vulnerable witnesses who have difficulty communicating. This allows them the same access to justice as other Australians." Read more [here](#).

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Building Blocks of Social Inclusion

Last week Australia marked Social Inclusion Week. To build a more socially inclusive Australia, governments, business, the not for profit sector, communities and individuals all need to work together, says Lin Hatfield Dodds, the Chair Australian Social Inclusion Board. Social Inclusion Week raises awareness of the importance of connecting with people in our community and looking out for one another. It also provides an opportunity to refocus on Australians who are at risk of being socially excluded and what works to bridge gaps and break down barriers so that they fully participate in community life. Read more [here](#).

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Housing Stress on the Rise

The demand for social housing in Australia is rising and waiting lists remain long, according to a new report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The *Housing Assistance in Australia 2012* report also reveals that Australian households are increasingly experiencing 'housing stress' with an increase from 900,000 (or 14% of all households) in 1995 to 1.4 million (17%) in 2010. Read more [here](#) and you can access the report [here](#).

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Advocate for mental health

Susan Dustin Hattan-Aldous kept the audience transfixed with her dramatisation and vocalisation of voices within those who suffer from different mental health illness. The laughter therapist from Melbourne, who is based in the Nonthaburi Province near Bangkok in Thailand, has been working in the field of care giving for 35 years, since she was 16. She has established her locally-funded organisation called One Life at a Time (OLAT), and has conducted caregiving activities throughout Australia, Southeast Asia, the US and South America. Refugee camps, mental wards, drug and alcohol rehabilitations, prisons, juvenile detention centres, under-funded hospitals, slums and emergency shelters are the backdrop for OLAT's projects. You can read more [here](#).

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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.