



Communiqué from National Mental Health Consumer Carer Register Workshop

On 23/24 April 2009, 55 mental health consumers and carers from the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Register held a workshop, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing and supported by the Mental Health Council of Australia. One aspect of the workshop was consideration of the 4th National Mental Health Plan.

The role of consumers and carers on the Steering Committee for this plan was acknowledged.

The gathered consumer and carer leaders agreed that the plan could be enhanced in the following ways:

1. the plan should demonstrate a genuine commitment to develop clearly enunciated goals, targets and measures. These measures would allow consumers and carers to assess the performance of Australia's mental health system;
2. the plan mentions the significance of the lived experience but currently fails to state how it will collect and report on the experience of consumers and carers. This is an essential performance measure for the mental health system;
3. the plan would be greatly enhanced through the adoption of a national consumer/carer participation policy as part of this plan, such as that developed by the NMHCCF (available from the Forum Secretariat); and
4. the plan should commit to the development of the organisational capacity of the consumer and carer sector across Australia. This would enable the sector to assist the plan to fruition.

The 55 consumer and carer leaders finally noted that the opportunity for consultation on this 4th Plan varied greatly across Australia. Future plans would benefit from an improved nationally consistent process that recognises the resources and support required to allow for appropriate consultation with and feedback from consumers and carers.

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