



**NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH  
CONSUMER & CARER FORUM**

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **Seclusion and Restraint statement says human rights abuse an everyday occurrence**

2 September 2009

Involuntary seclusion and restraint of mental health consumers is an abuse of human rights and an extremely traumatic and emotionally damaging experience, according to a statement released today by the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) at the TheMHS Conference in Perth.

“Seclusion and restraint often causes significant short and long term emotional damage to people with mental illness and new evidence shows that involuntary seclusion and restraint do not have a therapeutic value,” said NMHCCF consumer Co-Chair Isabell Collins.

“Consumers, carers, clinicians and staff have experienced and witnessed the direct and tragic harm that these practices can cause. We have seen the climate of fear and distress among consumers and a breakdown of therapeutic relationships resulting from the inappropriate use of seclusion and restraint,” Ms Collins said.

There is no evidence to indicate that seclusion and restraint offer positive health outcomes for people. Yet the practice is a daily occurrence Australia-wide. Available data suggests that there are just under 12,000 episodes of seclusion in Australia each year, or put another way, that seclusion occurs 33 times across Australia each day.

The Foreword to the Statement was written by Professor Ian Hickie, Executive Director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute who stated “The frequent requirement to seclude and restrain people with an acute mental illness highlights the ongoing failure of the mental health system to provide high quality care.”

“On commencing psychiatry, I found myself frequently questioning my own role in this common clinical scenario. Many years later it saddens me that we appear to have made little progress towards implementation of real alternatives. Until alternative locations for care and service are established, people requiring mental health care will be forced to attend psychiatric units characterised by their use of seclusion and restraint, not as a measure of last resort but as the default means of keeping order”.

The NMHCCF statement can be found at: [www.nmhccf.org.au](http://www.nmhccf.org.au).

**Media Contact: Simon Tatz on 0402 613 745 or 02 6285 3100**

Ph:(02) 6285 3100

Fax:(02) 6285 2166

E-mail: [nmhccf@mhca.org.au](mailto:nmhccf@mhca.org.au)

[www.nmhccf.org.au](http://www.nmhccf.org.au)