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NMHCCF launches mental health consumer and carer workforce paper

A position statement on supporting and improving the mental health consumer and carer workforce in Australia will be released tomorrow by the National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum (NMHCCF).

Consumers and carers are increasingly being employed – particularly in mental health services – as peer support workers, advocates, consultants, research officers, experts and advisors, however they are not being properly supported.

“The future of the mental health consumer and carer identified workforce is at a critical point in Australia,” said Isabell Collins, Co-Chair of the NMHCCF.

“In many places there is a lot to be done to bring the human resource management support of these workers up to a basic standard. This is obstructing the ability of these workers to operate effectively.

“Unless managers and staff are knowledgeable about recovery approaches and working with consumer and carers, these workers are increasingly overworked, underpaid – or not paid at all!”

The NMHCCF has found that no one actually know how many consumer and carer identified worker roles exist in Australia. As a result opportunities for using their expertise are not being effectively monitored or exploited in mental health services.

“Imagine the quality of the services that we could have if these positions were being used effectively, not only in mental health services, but in the wider community, in agencies like Centrelink, in housing, as court support officers and more broadly in the criminal justice system,” Ms Collins said.

The NMHCCF statement makes five major recommendations, including a comprehensive national audit of current consumer and carer identified workers and the development of a National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Identified Workforce Strategy.

Given the key role that the mental health consumer and carer identified workforce already plays in the sector, the NMHCCF urges all governments and employers to consider the challenges facing the workforce and commit appropriate resources to its support and development.

The NMHCCF urges governments to consider the recommendations of the NMHCCF Position Statement and act.

The NMHCCF position statement is available at: www.nmhccf.org.au/workforce

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