

MHCC'S APPEARANCE BEFORE MENTAL HEALTH INQUIRY

The Mental Health Co-ordinating Council (MHCC) appeared before the NSW Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into Mental Health Services on Tuesday, 28 May 2002 (10.45am-11.45am) in the Legislative Council Chamber.

MHCC addressed the terms of reference of the Inquiry, providing recommendations to the Select Committee to assist the mental health non-government (NGO) sector to meet the needs of people with mental health disabilities through the provision of effective and sustainable services.

MHCC provided the Committee with recommendations to clearly define the role of the mental health NGO sector within the mental health care system, including recognition of the NGO sector's present responsibilities in caring for people with mental health disabilities and the health promotion and community development roles they play.

These were some of the areas MHCC presented to the Inquiry;

- A review of the adequacy of service provision for people with mental health disabilities living in the community.
- Funding benchmarks for mental health NGOs in NSW are developed to ensure services be funded at financially viable levels for the delivery of high quality services.
- Additional funds be allocated to the mental health NGO sector following a joint needs assessment and a fully costed mental health service plan in each Area Health Service. The NSW Government should use this process to allocated sufficient funds in the next two years to bring the mental health NGO sector in NSW into line with, at least, national average expenditures on mental health NGO services.
- Carers of people with mental illnesses be assessed for their capacity to support consumers, be included in the planning of care programs and be assisted to access support for themselves.
- The allocation of the \$107.5 million of new mental health funding announced in April 2000 be discussed and accounted for in an open and transparent manner.
- NSW Health funds MHCC to review the structure and function of Community Consultative Committees in each Area Health Service to ensure there is a mechanism for genuine consultation with consumer, carer, NGO and community representatives.
- An NGO sector development position be funded for a period of three years to coordinate the joint planning of NGO and public mental health services within each Area Health Service catchment area. This position should be based within a peak body organisation and work closely with NSW Health, individual Area Health Services and the broad non-government sector.
- Equitable access to services for people with mental health problems and disorders, especially for people in rural and remote areas. The sector development officer would work in partnership with Area Health Services to develop flexible and creative solutions to address gaps in service provision.
- Mental health staff be provided with adequate training in the use of relevant outcome measures for the sector and funding be provided to resource the process of data collection and collation.

"As the peak body for the mental health NGO sector in NSW, MHCC has the knowledge and experience of over 100 member organisations to assist in the design and implementation of reforms in the delivery of better mental health services in NSW."