

Minister Lynch Launches LDU

All systems go for role out of Certificate IV across the sector

After much anticipation and a year of preparation, MHCC's NGO Learning and Development Unit (LDU) was officially launched on 21 April by the Hon Paul Lynch, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health), Minister for Local Government and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Over 120 guests came to be part of this important event, representing a wide range of member organisations and key government departments and organisations such as Health, Education & Training, TAFE, Justice Health and the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council.

The day was especially memorable for twenty graduates of the Certificate IV in Mental Health Work, the key program to be run by the LDU, who were presented with their certificates by the Minister as part of the ceremony. Three graduates took the opportunity to share something of their experience.

Kath Simmonds from Uniting Care Mental Health told guests that "receiving this certificate is such a proud moment and one of achievement." Even though she was challenged and stretched, for her this "amazing journey" was all about "gaining knowledge and implementing it within the field, reflecting on myself and growing professionally and gathering resources, learning from others and sharing experiences".

Another graduate, Joy Hewitt from Catholic Health Care said that although she had graduated "last century" as an Occupational Therapist, achieving this Certificate IV has been a highlight in her continuing journey of life long learning. She challenged others to take opportunities for further education when they are offered, even if it was not always easy to fit into your busy life. "We can always continue to learn" she said. "The skills and information I have gained in participating in the Certificate IV course have been of considerable benefit to me and therefore to those people who attend Day and Respite Service programs".

Ingeborg Stronkhorst from Richmond Fellowship reflected on what she described as a wonderful opportunity. "At first I was a little nervous but thanks to the ongoing support of MHCC staff I actually started to enjoy the experience of the whole process. I feel it is a great acknowledgement of the work that I have done so far. It is very satisfying to realise that I'm on the right track."

In addition to attending some "*Rehabilitation for Recovery*" courses, all of the graduates were able to achieve their certificates by having their existing skills recognised. For Ingeborg "I can highly recommend the RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) - it is definitely the quickest way I have ever gained a certificate".

MHCC joins the Minister in congratulating all our graduates and the LDU in leading the way to help raise the level of skills and professional standards across the sector. The challenge has now begun for all organisations in the

sector to get significant numbers of front line workers qualified with the Certificate IV, helped by RPL, traineeship funding opportunities and the work of the LDU. But we also acknowledge as Kath shared, “this piece of paper means nothing unless its contents are utilised to assist our clients along their journey of recovery”.

Footnote:

You can find out more about the services offered by the LDU (including RPL) and the Certificate IV in Mental Health Work on our website www.mhcc.org.au or by contacting the LDU on 02-9555 8388 ext 106

Mental Health Coordinating Council May 2008