

13<sup>th</sup> May 2003

Mr Marc Reynolds  
Project Officer  
Centre for Mental Health  
NSW Health Department

Dear Mr Reynolds,

Thank you for providing the Mental Health Co-ordinating Council (MHCC) with the opportunity to review the draft Service Plan for Eating Disorders in NSW. MHCC is the state peak body for non-government organisations (NGOs) working for mental health throughout NSW. MHCC represents the views and interests of over 100 NGOs in the formation of policy and acts as a liaison between the government and non-government sectors.

MHCC strongly supports the benefits and value of increased support and services for people with eating disorders and welcomes the development of this comprehensive draft service plan.

#### Comments

- There are many clients who may have eating disorders who do not access clinical services but have contact with NGOs. It is important that the eating disorders service plan encompasses this group of people.
- It is appropriate to identify eating disorders as core business for mental health and to incorporate a focus on the spectrum of care, which requires partnership and collaboration with a number of agencies and departments. NGOs need to be included in this partnership and collaboration.
- The establishment of an Eating Disorders Service Development Group, the development of local Area Health Service plans in collaboration with consumer groups and partner service providers, the appointment of an Eating Disorders Coordinator for each Area to assist in local services enhancement, and the development of clear and comprehensive local referral pathways into secondary and tertiary services are all appropriate recommendations to facilitate equity of access and consistent quality of care across the state. These initiatives would be very helpful for consumers, carers, families and non-government organisations working for mental health. The Eating Disorders Coordinator needs to work with NGOs who have clients with eating disorders accessing their services.
- The establishment of a Network and Resource Centre to facilitate access to specialist consultation and provide information on eating disorders is an excellent strategy, which would be very helpful for MHCC member organisations. MHCC strongly supports the proposal to collaborate with consumer organisations in the development of the centre. It is important that NGOs are included in this collaboration and that they also have access to specialist consultation when necessary.

Eating Disorders Service Plan Submission May 2003

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*Working For  
Mental Health*

Mental Health  
Co-ordinating Council

PO Box 668  
Rozelle, NSW 2039

Phone: (02) 9555 8388  
Fax: (02) 9810 8145  
Email: { [HYPERLINK](mailto:info@mhcc.org.au) }  
mailto:info@mhcc.org.au }  
Website: [www.mhcc.org.au](http://www.mhcc.org.au)

*MHCC is the peak  
Body for mental health  
Organisations in NSW*

- The proposal to support and enhance existing consumer and carer organisations and to facilitate the establishment of new consumer and carer support groups in areas where this is needed is strongly supported. This needs to be done in collaboration with NGOs.
- The incorporation of eating disorders into Area Mental Health Service Plans in order to ensure access to services, care planning and education and support of staff is highly desirable and appropriate. There should be collaboration with NGOs in relationship to care planning. NGO staff should also have access to education and support.
- The establishment of a range of prevention programs to address universal, selective and indicated populations is welcomed.
- The focus on early identification and response, which includes shared care with GPs and other primary health practitioners, is highly commended. NGOs also need to be included in this context.
- The identification of staff training and support as important areas to be addressed is welcomed, particularly as many clinicians are not competent in this area as it has previously been regarded as a speciality area. NGOs also need to have access to this training.
- The decision that it is the responsibility of every clinician to identify eating disorders in new and existing clients is sensible. However, there needs to be a mechanism whereby staff can provide feedback if they feel unable to competently carry out this role, for example due to inadequate training, staffing or resources.

In general, this draft service plan provides clear, helpful information and comprehensive, sensible recommendations, however, it needs to be more explicit in relation to the inclusion and involvement of NGOs. If this is addressed, it will be a useful resource for staff, consumers and carers in a difficult and important area.

If you would like to clarify any points in this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Ann MacLochlainn on (02) 9555 8388. MHCC would be pleased to review any further drafts.

Thank you for considering this feedback.

Yours sincerely,

Jenna Bateman  
Executive Officer  
Mental Health Co-ordinating Council