



*Working For
Mental Health*

23rd June, 2005

Mr Ian Frank
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Mental Health
Co-ordinating Council

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Dear Mr Frank

Thank you for providing the Mental Health Co-ordinating Council (MHCC) with the opportunity to contribute to the review of the education and training of psychiatrists provided by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)

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 150 NGOs in the formation of policy and acts as a liaison between the government and non-government sectors. Our member organisations specialise in the provision of services and support for people with a disability due to mental illness.

MHCC has not previously provided input into any of the training and continuing professional development programs or planning activities of the RANZCP and is not aware of any other processes to provide such input from community/consumer organisations. We have not had the opportunity to provide feedback to the RANZCP about the skills and competencies of psychiatrists and are not aware of involvement by any of our member organisations in the provision of such feedback. MHCC is very interested in providing such input and welcomes the opportunity to contribute. Our preferred method of providing input would be via consultation on a site visit.

The main area of psychiatrists' education and training that that MHCC views as in need of improvement is in the area of increased awareness of, and links with, non-government/community based mental health organisations. While we recognise that some psychiatrists perform very well in this area, it is MHCC's opinion that consumers would benefit greatly if psychiatrists in general had a more holistic view of consumers' lives and needs.

We acknowledge that symptom control and medication management are important and that, in general, psychiatrists are competent in these areas. However, many consumers also have needs in areas such as supported accommodation, development of employment related skills, social support and recreational activities. These are the types of programs carried out by non-government organisations. MHCC would like to see an increased awareness on the part of psychiatrists of the relevance and value of such programs for consumers. We would like to see psychiatrists linking consumers with non-government organisations that are relevant to the consumer's needs, and for this to be regarded as an important part of treatment and rehabilitation.

In addition, MHCC would like to see psychiatrists establish closer links with the non-government sector by becoming more involved in activities such as the provision of clinical supervision for staff.

Thank you for seeking our involvement in this important area. MHCC would be happy to discuss the issues further in the context of a site visit. If you would like to arrange a site visit or discuss any issues surrounding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact Ann MacLochlainn ann@mhcc.org.au or myself jenna@mhcc.org.au at MHCC on (02) 9 555 8388.

Yours sincerely

Jenna Bateman
Executive Officer
Mental Health Co-ordinating Council.