

## **NGO Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Grants Program**

*Autumn 2007: View from the Peak - CEO report*

Recognition of the importance of the NGO sector in improving the health of the community is increasing. The announcement of this Research Grants Program focusing on enabling NGOs to explore effective approaches to assisting people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems is very welcomed. The Program will provide 3 million dollars to research effective practices in the NGO sector. Partnerships with other NGOs, universities and institutes or Area Health Services will be important when developing proposals. Criteria for project funding has not yet been fully developed but will have the flexibility to incorporate a range of research approaches including action research which can be valuable in providing an evidence base for service development and capacity building. MHCC and NADA will work closely with sector representatives on the NGO Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Collaboration Group and with the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office (MHDAO) in the management and coordination of this initiative. MHCC will keep members posted with further information as it comes to hand.

More good news on the mental health and drug and alcohol front is a \$460,000 allocation from NSW Health to assist NGOs access appropriate training in drug and alcohol for mental health NGO workers and visa versa for drug and alcohol workers. It is proposed that the training focus on assessment, screening and brief interventions. Again MHCC will provide information as it comes to hand.

## **National Mental Health Standards Review**

The Australian Council on Health Care Standards (ACHS) is undertaking a review of the National Mental Health Standards. If all goes to plan we should see the final product in the early months of 2008. As can be appreciated the review of the Standards is an immense task. The Standards have been useful in many ways over the years since their release in 1996 but have also come into criticism for having a too 'clinical' focus and largely applicable only to public mental health services. This time round there is clearly a greater emphasis on the role of NGO and private mental health providers which reflects the shift in range of service delivery and recognition of mental health interventions as being as much about social, housing and vocational rehabilitation and support as clinical interventions. ACHS has a challenging task ahead in developing a set of Standards the range of services and organizations working in mental health can be reviewed against. Discussions are intense on how best this may be achieved and some creative

options posed. I am pleased to report however that the process is inclusive and one that recognizes and values the importance of NGO approaches and contributions within the mental health service system.

Best wishes  
Jenna Bateman  
CEO MHCC