

## NGO Development Strategy: Mental Health Newsletter

### Edition 1, November 2004

#### WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the Mental Health Co-ordinating Council's (MHCC) 'NGO Development Strategy: Mental Health' newsletter. As you may be aware, the MHCC has recently commenced a strategy to build the capacity of NGOs providing rehabilitation and recovery services in the community. Three project officers (Sarah Buxton, Greg Ford and Heidi Freeman) commenced with the MHCC in August 2004 to work on the Strategy.

The purpose of the NGO Development Strategy is to build the capacity of NGOs who provide mental health services in the community.

The key objectives of the NGO Development Strategy are:

- To assist NGOs to achieve and demonstrate quality and effectiveness in service delivery and organisational practice
- To encourage improved collaboration and partnerships in service planning and delivery between NGOs and between NGOs and funding bodies

#### AGM WORKSHOPS

The recent MHCC Annual General Meeting, held on 22 October 2004, provided MHCC members with an opportunity to meet with Sarah, Greg and Heidi and to contribute to consultations about priorities for the Strategy. Members broke into three workshop groups to discuss the following topics:

- Identity and setting priorities
- Collaboration and partnerships

- Workforce development

Some of the key issues that emerged in the workshop groups included:

- The unique role played by NGOs in the mental health system is often undervalued
- Recognition of NGOs as complimentary service partners, by Area Health Services (AHSs), is crucial in enhancing understanding of the range of approaches that are effective for consumers
- It is important to promote the non-government sector as a professionally rewarding career choice for mental health workers
- Consideration to be given to changing 'NGO' title. Some workshop participants expressed a preference for 'community-based organisations'
- There is a need to develop formal processes between AHSs and NGOs, such as memorandums of understanding and service agreements
- Attention should be paid to developing appropriate competencies for accreditation and workplace training purposes
- There is a need to address issues concerning supervision of staff and volunteers
- Training needs of staff, managers, volunteers, and management committees are a high priority

Further details about the AGM workshops can be found in the Spring 2004 edition of 'View from the Peak' or by visiting the MHCC website [www.mhcc.org.au](http://www.mhcc.org.au) and then follow the links to 'Hot Issues' and 'MHCC NGO Sector Development Report'.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



In the initial phase, the central focus of the NGO Development Strategy is workforce development. Workforce development is often mistakenly understood to only involve vocational education and training. In reality,

workforce development is much broader and involves working with the systems and structures that shape the sector. Workforce development aims to ensure that service delivery is characterised by quality, innovation and evidence based practice.

The MHCC has identified workforce development as being essential to the successful delivery of high quality, relevant and accessible services to consumers. The quality that defines workforce development and makes it so effective is its focus on planning and coordinating all controllable factors that shape effective service delivery. It requires the active involvement of all those involved in service delivery. Garnering enthusiasm for such involvement is a central part of workforce development.

With respect to workforce development the NGO Development Strategy will focus on **the individual** (vocational education and training, mentoring, and participation in networks), **the organisation** (workplace policies and procedures, performance monitoring systems, job specifications, resource allocation, management priorities and partnerships) and **the sector** (recruitment and retention of staff, the development of industry wide competencies and standards, educational curricula, and the development of vocational training courses).

## CONSULTATIONS

The next phase of the NGO Development Strategy will involve consultations with specialist and mainstream NGOs and Area Health Services across the state.

The purpose of the consultations is to seek the views of service providers about the priorities for the Strategy and ways to enhance the capacity of NGOs providing mental health services. Consultations will seek to identify areas in greatest need of support and development, examine factors that limit delivery of mental health services in the NGO sector, and how these factors could be changed. Consultations will also aim to identify factors that are working well with the aim of sharing these amongst service providers.

## QUESTIONS

Some of the key questions we will be asking during our consultations include:

- What are your priorities for the NGO Development Strategy?
- What are the priorities for workforce development in your organisation?
- What are the current and future training needs of staff in your organisation?
- What are examples of successful partnerships, and barriers to partnerships, between your organisation and funding providers?
- What are examples of successful partnerships between your organisation and other service providers?

## CONTACT US

The project officers welcome ideas and comments about the NGO Development Strategy and your response to the questions above. Please feel free to contact us by phone or email:

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