MEDIA RELEASE
Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia

The new national Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia was launched in March 2014 on Harmony Day. The release of the Framework is welcomed and supported by the National Mental Health Commission.

Associate Professor Harry Minas, Chair of Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHIMA), said “Australia is a multicultural country in which more than 200 languages are spoken and where over a quarter of Australians are overseas born. This diversity is an asset to Australia and many new and settled communities continue to be positive contributors in our multicultural society. However, whilst this is positive there is no room to be complacent. It is important to acknowledge that significant challenges still remain in addressing added barriers people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities face in being able to receive culturally responsive mental health services”.

The range of issues and complexities involved were highlighted in a discussion paper prepared by MHIMA for the National Mental Health Commission, Mental health research and evaluation in multicultural Australia: Developing a culture of inclusion which was released as a spotlight report in September 2013.

The release of the Framework forms part of a practical response to the issues raised in the discussion paper. The Framework is an interactive online resource and introduces an important new rating scale that enables new and existing services to measure organisational cultural responsiveness to better meet the needs of CALD communities. The Framework also includes a suite of supporting resources that can be used by individual workers to reflect on their own practice in being culturally responsive and best practice examples referenced to the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (2012) and the National Standards for Mental Health Services (2010).

To access more information about the Framework an Introductory Guide has been developed to explain how it works. The Introductory Guide can be accessed via www.mhima.org.au/framework. The Framework also contains 5 key concept sheets that provide supporting evidence and background information about the key theoretical underpinnings of the Framework.

Associate Professor Harry Minas continued by saying, “Change requires opportunities for consumers, carers and their families to contribute to the national conversation, the urgent need for better national CALD related data collection and analysis and a mental health workforce better equipped to respond to cultural diversity. The current lack of comprehensive and reliable data on the mental health of CALD communities means that the disparities and inequities that exist are all but invisible”.

MHIMA believes that an initial key step over the coming is period is achievement of an integrated and collaborative national focus on better and improved use of existing data collection and implementation of the Framework that involves every state and territory across Australia. It is anticipated that such an approach will provide a practical focus on mental health system capacity and performance in meeting the needs of consumers from CALD backgrounds in ways that are effective, efficient and evidence based.
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About Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHiMA)

MHiMA project is funded by the Australian Government, Department of Health through the National Mental Health Program.

MHiMA provides a national focus across Australia on issues relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in relation to mental health and suicide prevention. We are committed to delivering practical and evidence-based advice and support to government, non-government providers, primary health care professionals, consumers, carers and their families.

Our vision is for an open and inclusive society committed to human rights and diversity in which everyone requiring mental health services is able to access culturally responsive services irrespective of cultural or linguistic background. MHiMA is committed to achieve this vision by developing effective and respectful collaborations across all sectors to address the mental health needs of Australia’s CALD populations.

MHiMA is managed by an executive comprised of representatives of four consortium member organisations and has a shared governance structure. The consortium member organisations are:

- Queensland Transcultural Mental Health Centre (QTMHC), Queensland Health, Metro South Mental Health Service
- University of Melbourne, School of Population & Global Health
- University of South Australia (UniSA) - the Mental Health Substance Abuse Research Group, Human Rights and Security Cluster.
- Victorian Transcultural Mental Health (VTMH), Victorian Department of Human Services.