SEPTEMBER 2012

If you have a lived experience of mental health issues, are a family member, friend or support person for someone who experiences mental health issues, or work in the mental health sector and would like to be involved in our community engagement activities, please email the Commission Secretariat indicating your interest and home state at: enquiries@mentalhealthcommission.gov.au. Please also subscribe to our mailing list to ensure you get our news and updates.

Roundtables Reports

The Commission has been working hard since its establishment on 1 January 2012 to engage with a variety of people with a lived experience of mental health issues, their families and carers along with leaders and service providers from across sectors. We recognise the importance of hearing people’s views and experiences to directly inform our work.

Our engagement has included a series of four Roundtables on 26-27 April which were opened by
the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Mental Health Reform, the Hon Mark Butler MP, as well as the Youth Roundtable: Western Australia, held on 1 June 2012 as a joint initiative with the Western Australian Mental Health Commission and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Youth Mental Health Project Implementation Steering Group.

You can now read reports we’ve prepared on these forums [here](#).

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to those who have met with us to date and participated in these and other important discussions. Your knowledge and input has been greatly valued and will be used to inform not only the development of the first Report Card, but many other areas including preparation of the Commission’s Strategies and Actions 2012-2015 which sets out how we will do our work in our first three years.

**Regular Lived Experiences Survey**

The Commission is pleased to announce support for a Regular Lived Experiences Survey which will capture the experiences of people with a mental health condition, their families, carers and other support people as they navigate mental health services. Building on existing efforts in this space, the project will include substantial consultation and engagement with people who have a lived experience of mental health issues, as well as government, private and community based service providers. The project will develop an instrument and a methodology to qualitatively measure experience of care for those with a mental health condition, their families, carers and support people, so that they can be surveyed on a regular basis with the results reported publicly in the National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.

**Alice Springs Commission meeting and visit to Ltyentye Apurte**
From 15 to 17 August the National Mental Health Commission travelled to Alice Springs in the Northern Territory to hold its fourth formal meeting, with the agenda dedicated to hearing from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. Arriving in Alice Springs on Wednesday 15 August, Commissioners met with local health and mental health service providers for an afternoon tea hosted by the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CACC).

On Thursday 16 August the Chair and Commissioners travelled about 80 km south east of Alice Springs to visit Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) Aboriginal community. Hosted by the Mpwelarre Health Aboriginal Corporation’s (MHAC) community controlled primary health care clinic, the Commissioners were welcomed to Country with a traditional dance.

The key messages that the community wanted the Commission to hear were:
- Listen to us
- Include us in decisions that affect us
- Support us to develop our own models of care for ourselves, our families and our community.

The Commission heard about a number of community approaches to improving social and emotional wellbeing, which fit with local tradition and culture. We also made the first contribution under our Paid Participation Policy to members of the community for their contribution to our work.

On Friday 17 August the Commission met to hear Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders speak about the priorities, policy objectives and challenges in social and emotional wellbeing, suicide prevention and mental health. The communique and minutes of the meeting are available on our website here.

Visit by Canadian Mental Health Commissioner Louise Bradley

Ms Louise Bradley, President and CEO of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, travelled to Australia as part of a knowledge exchange sponsored by our national Commission. Her visit included speaking at The Mental Health Services Conference (TheMHS) on 24 August along with Deputy CEO Georgie Harman who gave a presentation on what we’re doing to foster collaboration with other Commissions, states and territories. The visit also included a meeting between Australian and New Zealand Commission representatives to discuss opportunities for knowledge exchange and maintaining strong relationships.

Ms Bradley presented Minister Butler with a copy of Canada’s first national mental health strategy ‘Changing Directions, Changing Lives’ which is available for download here.

The Commission also facilitated a number of meetings with people who have a lived experience of mental health issues, their families and carers, including among them Michael Burge and Judy Bentley from the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum. Ms Bradley also met with
Graeme Innes, Australian Disability Commissioner and the newly appointed NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley, as well as leaders from the Mental Health Council of Australia, Beyondblue, ComCare, SANE Australia, SafeWork Australia, the Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association, Richmond PRA and the Black Dog Institute.

Ms Bradley was able to spend time with our Commissioners Janet Meagher and Jackie Crowe to discuss the importance of including people with a lived experience of mental health issues, their families and carers in decision making and policy settings for mental health.

The Commission CEO and staff found Ms Bradley's visit immensely valuable as it allowed us to learn from what Canada has done and to explore how we will work together on areas of mutual interest. We look forward to continuing to have a close and strong relationship with the Canadian Commission.

**Chair and CEO visit to Tasmania**

On 28-29 August the Commission's Chair and CEO visited Hobart to hear first-hand about the services and systems that provide support for people with mental health issues in Tasmania. We met with people with lived experience and their support people, as well as a range of service providers, members and staff of the Mental Health Council of Tasmania, Statewide Mental Health Services staff, the Secretaries from the Departments of Premier and Cabinet (Mr Rhys Edwards) and Health and Human Services (Mr Matthew Daley), and the Tasmanian Minister for Health the Hon Michelle O'Byrne.

The Commission learnt about a variety of issues including specific areas of need such as regional service provision, pathways to care beyond hospital based and clinical services (particularly for referrals and those at risk of suicide), appropriate services to cover child and adolescent age groups, and recognition for the concerns facing the LGBTI community. We discussed ways to drive improvement including through evaluation to ensure best practice, collaboration (particularly taking account of geography) and mental health education and training. The need for a variety of appropriate and long term housing options was another key message.

The Commission was told about the progress of Tasmania's Suicide Prevention Strategy 2010-2014 and steps being taken to encourage greater collaboration between services including through establishment of the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network. We also heard about future improvements in the protection of rights that are expected through a new Mental Health Act for Tasmania, with a Bill to be debated in parliament soon.

**Eureka Clubhouse visit**
We visited the **Eureka Clubhouse**, an innovative community model based on international best practice that uses work-focused days to provide individuals with the opportunity to regain confidence and assimilate into the wider community. During lunch prepared by members and staff we heard about the significant improvements in people's lives achieved through membership, including from stable housing and employment.

The Commission is grateful to all the people who gave up their time to come and share their knowledge and experience with us. We found the visit insightful and particularly valuable in understanding the concerns and unique characteristics of mental health service provision in Tasmania and we look forward to returning in 2013 with the full Commission.

### 2012 Key Dates

**Remaining Commission meetings 2012:**

- **3 - 4 Oct** in Adelaide, SA
- **21 - 22 Nov** in Orange, NSW

**Other events include:**

- **10 Sept** - World Suicide Prevention Day
- **13 Sept** - R U OK? Day. Who will you ask?
- **9 Oct** -- the first Council of Non-Government Organisations (CONGO) on Mental Health will be held in partnership with the Mental Health Council of Australia, to help foster collaboration and to enable us to engage directly with a number of community organisations
- **10 Oct** -- World Mental Health Day

### 2013 Commission Meetings

**Commission meetings 2013 dates and locations:**

- **31 Jan - 1 Feb** in Sydney NSW
- **7 - 8 March** in Cairns QLD
- **9 - 10 May** in Canberra ACT
- **18 - 19 July** in Port Hedland WA
- **22 - 23 Aug** in Launceston TAS
- **10 - 11 Oct** in Melbourne VIC

### Commission Meetings

In accordance with our Operating Principles the Commission will meet a minimum of six times per year, with one meeting dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues, and at least three meetings held in non-metropolitan locations. Wherever possible each Commission meeting will include engagement with consumers, carers and other stakeholders, including visits to mental health related services.