



**People diagnosed with
'mental illness' doing
things for ourselves**

**OUR CONSUMER PLACE
NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2012**



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RESOURCE CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS

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“... the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars.”

— Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

Intentional Peer Support “final assignments”

As part of the Intentional Peer Support (IPS) training in early September (see page 19) participants were asked to produce a “final assignment” where they share their understanding of IPS. We believe these projects are innovative ways to share the learnings. We hope to share more in future editions.

A story in two parts, by Debra Parker, 7/9/2012 (an IPS “final assignment”)

Part One

I am walking up the hill. It is nearly 9am. People are passing me, rushing off to work, to their busy, busy lives. And what am I doing? I am going to meet my new mental health support worker. Well that’s what they call them. I call them do-gooders who look at me, assess my inadequacies and then politely suggest to make my life more meaningful I should take up Art Therapy classes, attend group lunches to redevelop my socialisation skills and not to forget to take my medication – not knowing that I have already stopped that. It’s always the same. I don’t know why I keep going back. Well, yes I do. My case manager said I have to.

It’s the same each time. You have so much potential. I know that but what if I don’t consider this is a good time to realise my potential. We can send you to a course that will help you to get ready to go back to work. My past just shows that I can’t hold a job. I chuckle to myself. We can come with you to any medical appointments if you don’t feel comfortable going alone. Who am I that you feel this need to mother me?

I wonder about this new worker. How will it be this time? Should I make things interesting for her, be difficult, play along with the game? That could make my life more interesting. God if they only knew just how bored I really am.

Recovery orientated services. So I am in recovery yet again.

Well I am here now. They tell me this time I have a peer support worker. What the hell is a peer support worker? I guess it is just another name for the same old stuff.

Oh yes, here we go, the pamphlet. Always with the pamphlet from the smiling peachy faced girl behind the counter.

You can wait in there if you like. What if I don’t like?

I walk into the waiting room. At least they have comfy couches here. I look around me. Goddam pamphlets – they are everywhere.

I look at the one in my hand. I notice it says we practice Intentional Peer Support. Ok that’s interesting but what does that mean? Another fancy name for another new approach. My eyes are drawn to a photograph. Two women sitting on a park bench laughing. I have done the park bench thing and there was definitely no laughing. To laugh with someone there needs to be a connection, a relationship, something you both find amusing. I wonder to myself, could that happen?

I read the pamphlet. It tells me peer support is about two people building a relationship, working together toward a future, about learning together. I think about this for a minute. A relationship. It is a long time since I had a genuine relationship. I keep reading.

I am going to meet my new mental health support worker. Well that’s what they call them. I call them do-gooders who look at me, assess my inadequacies and then politely suggest to make my life more meaningful I should take up Art Therapy classes, attend group lunches to redevelop my socialisation skills and not to forget to take my medication

This worker might want a relationship but she is now officially late. But that is typical. I am just the client waiting to see the worker. It is always about what suits the worker and she will come when she has made me wait just the right amount of time.

Ah those things you don't want. In the past it has always been about managing and changing those things you don't want in your life. What if I didn't have to focus on that? What if I could look forward? And what if I could do that with someone else?

Suddenly a head pops around the corner.

"Hello, I am sorry to keep you waiting. I am on the phone but I just wanted to pop down and let you know I won't be too much longer." Then she is off again.

Ok, I think well that was decent of her.

I return to my pamphlet. It says peer support focuses on both people talking about how we know what we know. No-one has ever asked me how I know what I know. Is this person genuinely going to share with me their

experiences? Will I have value in this relationship? If they share their story and they want to hear mine will we find a shared space where we can learn from each other, where we can grow together?

I am starting to warm to this concept. I read about moving towards things, mutual things, things both people consider to be important rather than controlling the things you don't want in your life. Ah those things you don't want. In the past it has always been about managing and changing those things you don't want in your life. What if I didn't have to focus on that? What if I could look forward? And what if I could do that with someone else?

I find myself wanting and waiting for her to come back. I think I have a little twinge of excitement. And I thought today was going to be just another boring day. Today might just be the beginning of something different.

And here she is.

Part Two

Monday morning! I love Monday mornings. It's the day I use to meet new clients and today I will be meeting someone new. I wonder what she will be like. What a privilege to be in my role. The opportunities I have to grow and learn from the people I work with are endless. My eyes are drawn to a photograph on my noticeboard and I see myself and a past client sitting on a park bench laughing. I love that photo. It was a defining day for me. A time where I just relaxed and were in the moment. We laughed so much our jaws ached. I don't even remember why now. We had developed such a strong connection. I leave it there to remind me about the joy of those moments of togetherness lest I forget the focus of my work. I ponder that day for a moment and think about all the hard work we both put into that relationship. Her with her 33 piercings and 17 tattoos and me with none and none. Talking about the various ways we made sense of our place in the world, struggling to understand but respectfully appreciating our differences, constantly moving towards the things that inevitably strengthened our relationship and contributed to our individual growth.

My reminiscing is interrupted by the telephone. Almost simultaneously our peachy faced receptionist appears, "Your new client is here".

I ask my caller to hold. I hate making people wait. I run downstairs, say Hi, sorry and I'll be back soon.

As I run upstairs I think Ah, she is reading the pamphlet. I wonder if those things ever do any good.

My mantras, by Janet Karagounis, from Voices Vic (an IPS “final assignment”). Janet says she decided to do these both to push herself to try something completely different (“telling my story is easy!) and also because she encourages people she works with to develop their own mantras.

I have a past
a present and
a future.
All of this influences the
WAY I SEE THE WORLD

I will find myself in a position
of openness to new possibilities
and thus be able to work
outside the box when required.
Taking risks while being
present with **HONESTY,**
CLARITY and
OPENNESS.

***WE ALL HAVE A STORY TO SHARE –
I choose to share my story
without FEAR and with integrity.
I am able to share parts of my story,
both positive and negative,
as part of a reflective conversation.***

★★★★★★★★★★
I believe everyone can RECOVER.
I am prepared to explore what that means for every individual.
I am willing to try new things.
For as long as I am alive,
I will be on the exciting journey
of recovery **MYSELF**.
With every **INTERACTION**,
I WILL GROW.
★★★★★★★★★★

[Ed note: the paper Janet’s mantras were written on was from Voices Vic; it read: “A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song.”]

INTRODUCING ... In this edition, we are pleased to bring you the latest from Voices Inc, an initiative that combines art, business skills and mutual support, founded by a voice hearer, Peter Hawes. Voices Inc is expanding rapidly and building a "legacy of recovery"! There is a centre already operating in Horsham (Vic) with many more in development. [Ed's note: I bought a piece of Peter's at TheMHS in Adelaide last year, a glass pendant – sky blue glass, spattered with blood-red flecks, encasing an old-fashioned razor blade. It is arresting and incredibly beautiful. But it was rather interesting taking it through security at the airport!!]

VOICES INC CENTRE!

Recovery from Mental Illness is always POSSIBLE

Voices Inc is a centre originally founded by Peter Hawes a voice hearer who has embarked on his own recovery journey and now a public speaker, mental health trainer and recognised artist and author.

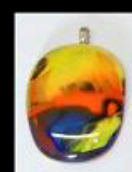
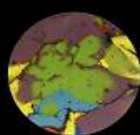
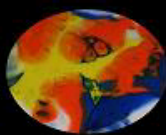
Voices Inc is a safe place where people who have been diagnosed and told that they will not recover can do the total opposite! You will work on your own story and move forward on your individual recovery pathway.

We do not believe in mental illness, so leave your diagnosis at the door

We believe in trauma, emotional and mental distress and above all we believe in Recovery!

So come join the Voices Inc family!

Examples of work from Voices Inc



We do a range of art sessions including Glass, Printmaking and many other cool activities.

Contact a Voices Inc Member to enquire about attending Voices Inc today!

Peter Hawes
President
0401756503
Peter.Hawes@voices-inc-online.com

Tori Duncombe
Director
0413328740
Tori.Duncombe@voices-inc-online.com

Fiona Nguyen
Director
0401669121
Fiona.Nguyen@voices-inc-online.com



NEWS IN THE CONSUMER WORLD:



From Mary O'Hagan and Sara McCook Weir, at Peer Zone:

PeerZone is ready to go in New Zealand and Australia and will be available in other countries soon.

We have developed a series of peer-led workshops where people explore recovery and whole of life wellbeing. PeerZone is a great new practice tool for peer workers and a personal development opportunity for people with mental distress who use services. We can train and support peers to facilitate PeerZone workshops in your area.

Watch the video and explore the website at www.peerzone.info. Get in touch with us at info@peerzone.info.

Allan Pinches' fantastic talk on peer support and participatory research!

Consumer-collaborative research as a key enabler for peer support

Allan Pinches, a consumer researcher and deep thinker, presented his research into developing a peer support program at a Community Care Unit, at The Mind Colloquium Series on September 7th. This series is presented by Mind in collaboration with VICSERV and The Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics, The Melbourne School of Population Health, University of Melbourne.

Allan has an incredible ability to articulate what peer support is *really* about (yes, we all have some idea, but Allan brings a depth of thought that is truly refreshing), and his approach to participatory research is such a welcome change to research-as-usual. His reflections include how we make research real for the people involved (traditionally being "research on"). Highly recommended: www.mindaustralia.org.au/about-mind/research/colloquiums.html

A letter from Jon Kroschel [one of the founding members of OCP],

21st August 2012.

"As some of you may have heard, I have resigned from my position as Consumer Consultant at Alfred Psychiatry. My last day will be the 14th September 2012. I have been writing letters of farewell to the networks that I am involved in and have left the most difficult one till last.

For many years we dreamed of a place that was uniquely 'our own' and now it is real. It has our own language, our own unique way of seeing things, holds a unique perspective, and operates in our own unique way. What an astounding achievement to all involved. Any and all awards received for its work are well deserved. Our Consumer Place will always be a part of me.

And yet just the other day a senior clinician asked me how they could "be involved in managing the place that was for 'our' consumers". I made some rude comment about slavery and ownership of people being abolished a long time ago and went onto explain what 'Our Consumer Place' really

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meant and stood for. The response was “Oh so it’s managed by consumers!?” We still have so far to go.

Why am I leaving Alfred Psychiatry? Change is coming to all things consumer at Alfred Psychiatry and I don’t necessarily agree with all the ‘new visions’ that are being laid out. It seems that the priority focus of Consumer Participation will be on Consumer service provision (in various roles) and not focused on the service hearing about the impact that its practices and treatments have on



A much younger Jon Kroschel with Cath Roper, from 1995 (U&I project)

consumers. I have even seen it written here ... “that these traditional types of Consumer Participation Programs have lost some of their relevance ...” and “... the conversations around the value of traditional consumer participation programs is that they have outlived their day”!!!!

I believe that as long as there are forced treatments, seclusion rooms and CTO’s then hearing from Consumers is the highest priority of relevance.

It also seems that systemic delusionalism is rife.

“We (Alfred Psychiatry) are already doing Recovery focused Care” and “we have been successful at implementing our no smoking policy into the Wards”.

Well that’s not what I see. These are just some of the reasons for me leaving after 15 years.

What will I do next? I really don’t know. People can’t understand that I truly have made no plans other than to literally walk amongst all sorts of groups of people (who are migrants, maybe from Sudan or from Sri Lanka, or Youth in the Juvenile Justice system or who are Refugees etc) and see what turns up. People look really puzzled when I tell them that. Apparently every-one else needs a job already lined up that they can go to before leaving.

Not me. I am going to have a look around, meet groups of people, say “Hi there” and see what turns up. There are so many groups of people who have no voice in decisions made about their lives.

But I did want to say farewell to so many of you who have supported me over all these years. Your kindness, understanding, conversations and wisdom have been my constant companion. When-ever I have spoken, it always seemed as if you were standing with me in spirit and that gave me strength. I thank you all for so many things

Thank you to Merinda and Flick for expanding the work at Our Consumer Place. Special thanks to Cath who shared a side-splitting laughter moment with me when got lost on an escalator. Best therapy ever. Thank you to all the other people who gave of your time to meet and speak with me. I have been blessed by your company.

So fare thee well my friends. I am off to have an adventure and to live the best life I can live as determined by me (so kind of you Flick).



Cheers and thanks
Jon Kroschel.”

Update from the National Mental Health Commission

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.

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 [on their website].

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.

Editor's note: It is somewhat frustrating to read reports from the Commission that acknowledge that they need to hear from and engage with Indigenous *leaders*, the discussion of how consumer knowledge is accessed is constantly framed as "hearing people's views and experiences" and often framed as needing to access "a diversity of views and experiences". We continue to argue that consumer *leadership* needs to be recognised, that in addition to seeking out the views and experiences of a diversity of consumers (just as there may be a role for seeking out the views and experiences of a diversity of indigenous people), there is also a role for **consumer leadership**! It's intensely frustrating – even insulting – that after all this time we still need to make this point!

TheMHS Awards

Our Consumer Place is pleased to announce that we won a gold achievement award in the Consumer Provided category at the recent Mental Health Services Conference in Cairns. The certificate says it is an:

Award for an innovative mental health resource centre made unique by the depth and vision brought by the lived experience of the staff.

We're chuffed!

Some other award winning projects with significant consumer leadership include:

- **Voices Vic** who jointly won the gold award with us:

“Voices Vic, Prahran Mission, is an innovative, consumer-led recovery program which services all of Victoria. At Voices Vic we work with the experience of hearing voices, and we believe recovery is possible for everyone. ‘Hearing voices’ can be a part of many different mental health experiences. ... Voices Vic delivers, and educates in, specialised approaches to recovery for voice hearers. Our work is driven by the experience of people who have recovered themselves. We work in two arenas:

- 1. A consumer-led centre of excellence for working with voices: peer-support groups, direct support, volunteering and employment.*
- 2. Building the capacity of the mental health system, families/carers and broader community to understand voices and support recovery: training, conferences, resources and public talks.*

- **A Person-Centred Mental Health Workshop for the Health and Welfare Workforce** from Broken Hill (who won a silver award in the Rural/remote category):

“Over the last six years, the Person-Centred Mental Health Workshop has been delivered to over 350 health and welfare staff as well as nursing, medical and social work students, in Far West NSW. Workshop content and format is the product of a collaborative venture between consumers of the local mental health service and the local Mental Health Academic. It combines consumer driven literature, contemporary mental health practice and the consumers “lived experience” to deliver lessons to health workers about the impact of their practice. ...”

- **Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) national initiative** (who won a gold award in the Special Achievement category).

... The COPMI national initiative aims to foster better mental health outcomes for children of parents with a mental illness, reduce stigma and help friends, family and workers in a range of settings and identify and respond to the needs of these children and their families. This is achieved by developing information for parents, their partners, carers, family and friends to support these children and by providing training resources for workers to support families either individually or through community services and programs. COPMI resources are developed in consultation and under the guidance of people with a lived experience of parental mental illness, and leading researchers and service providers in the mental health field.

More information on all the awards is available at:

<http://www.themhs.org/preview/files/pdf/TheMHS%20Award%20Booklet%202012.pdf>



L-R: Allan Fels (Chair, National Mental Health Commission), Flick Grey and Merinda Epstein (both Our Consumer Place).

★POWERS★ Psych Ward Recovery & Support

Gday ✨ Powerful People ✨

I'd just like to share out and proud that today's [Friday 14th Sept, 2012] Powers meeting went really well and a big thank you to all who could make it.



We covered quite a few energetic topics and our main aim now is to implement our first Powers workshop "How to plan and run a workshop!"

If you feel you'd like to come along to this interactive and fun session to learn how to run your own consumer based workshops or experiment with a bit of public speaking (it's really not that scary), please RSVP with your interest.

Date and time will be advised, but will be a Friday arvo in October. The venue is North Melbourne Town Hall (thank you to Wild@heART Community Arts for the helping out with the space)

Look forward to our next session, until then some words of advice from my favourite martian, Bear Grylls:

"So you're in a spot of trouble. Well, you aren't the first and you sure won't be the last - so have faith and keep your hope up. Whether you make it out alive or not will largely come down to you: your attitudes and your actions"

-Heidi

Heal for Life Foundation gathering in Victoria (Portland)

Below is a letter addressed to people who have participated in a healing week at Heal For Life Foundation (www.healforlife.com.au).

Hello ☺

You are warmly invited to attend the first get together of the 'Portland Heal for Life Foundation' group in Portland.

The aim of our group is to connect people who have participated in a healing week at Heal for Life foundation (HFLF) and are continuing on their healing journeys and using HFLF healing model and 'Aspirations' in their day to day life. It will be great to build our own HFLF community in the place where we live, so we can catch up, encourage each other, and feel less isolated on our journeys. My vision for us is to have HFLF grow in Victoria so eventually we have something well established here in our State like they have in NSW. This would make healing for many Victorians kids, youth & adults so much more accessible. We have to start somewhere right... ☺

Also as other HFLF community members connect in other areas of Victoria we will be able to catch up all together occasionally and stay connected and involved that way. Who knows one day we could possibly have carer training held in Victoria-anything is possible when you believe ☺. During our first meeting we can discuss what we would like our group to include, it could be sharing, reflections or just socially the options of what we could together as a group are really exciting. It

would be wonderful to see you at our first meeting and if you can't make that's ok too, you can feel welcome to join in at anytime.

Our first meeting will be on Monday the 24th September at the [Tea Tree Gallery](#) (Room booked for us especially☺) from 11.30 till 1.00pm for lunch and cuppa (please bring money for lunch)

Also to let you know you can connect with HFLF online community via [facebook](#):

- Heal for Life Foundation Victoria & Supporters
- Heal for Life Foundation Auction Fundraiser Group
- Heal for Life Foundation, Childhood Trauma Healing Centres

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me, Louise Boyadjian on 0429217148

Congratulations to SHERY MEAD for her 2012 Voice Award from SAMHSA (US).

“Shery Mead had her first encounter with the mental health system as a teenager. It was a time when most people were over-medicated, shock treatments were routine, and no one asked about trauma and abuse. She was offered life in a halfway house and a limited future. Instead of accepting this fate, she threw out her pills and put her creative energy into music, allowing her to “say that which could not be said.” Years later she found herself back in the system, and discovered that neither the culture nor prognoses had changed much. In response, she started a peer organization and one of the Nation’s first peer-run crisis respites, where the focus was specifically on “unlearning the mental patient role.”

Ms. Mead’s own experiences began to inform the research and writing she was doing for master’s and doctoral studies, and Intentional Peer Support was born. The focus of Intentional Peer Support is on building authentic, mutually responsible relationships, providing a radical alternative to the focus on deficits. It has attracted international attention, and been adopted by a number of States, governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. Several human rights groups are promoting Intentional Peer Support as a non-coercive approach aimed at community development and social change.

Ms. Mead has spoken at many conferences and provided training locally, nationally, and internationally. Her current interests include:

- Peer-run crisis respites and alternatives;
- Peer support as social action and social change;
- The development and implementation of trauma-informed peer programs and groups; and
- Narrative and participatory evaluation and research.

Ms. Mead has written and co-written a number of books and had articles published in academic journals. She was part of the development of the SAMHSA publication *Consumer-Operated Services Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) KIT (Knowledge Informing Transformation)*.”

For more information, see: <http://www.samhsa.gov/voiceawards/2012winners.asp>.

National Mental Health Consumer Organisation Establishment Project

Auspiced by the Mental Health Council of Australia Funded by the Department of Health and Ageing

Consumer Reference Group Communiqué, Canberra, 30 – 31 August 2012

Diverse Voices, Shared Vision

The project to establish the new National Mental Health Consumer Organisation (NMHCO) under the auspice of the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) has begun. The Consumer Reference Group (CRG) has been convened to provide the MHCA with expert consumer advice on the establishment of the NMHCO by developing a collaborative approach to project planning, implementation and evaluation.

The CRG met for the first time in Canberra on 30 and 31 August 2012. The primary purpose of the meeting was to begin the collaborative planning process for the establishment of the NMHCO. The recommendations from the final report of the *Scoping Study to Inform the Establishment of a New Consumer Peak National Mental Health Consumer Organisation*¹ and the Australian Government response provided the foundation for discussion over the two days.

Outcomes

CRG members agreed that their energy, enthusiasm and commitment to sound process, together with their diverse voice and shared vision, will contribute to the development of a robust and sustainable peak organisation in the future. Members shared a sense of confidence in their ability to deliver strong consumer input to this project. Agreed meeting outcomes were:

- an indicative legal framework for the CRG and MHCA to work towards for the new organisation
- a focus on great governance in all aspects of NMHCO business
- modelling a recovery framework in all aspects of the NMHCO establishment and within the context of the independent entity.

Meeting Parameters

The inaugural meeting of the CRG and the MHCA was independently facilitated and aimed to provide orientation to, and understanding of, the scope and parameters of the NMHCO Establishment Project. Orientation included presentations from the Department of Health and Ageing and the MHCA.

Developing an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of CRG members and the MHCA project team, and establishing good communication channels, was a central focus. This will foster a strong and collaborative relationship throughout the life of the NMHCO establishment project and beyond.

An introduction to establishing governance training session was delivered to develop and strengthen a broad understanding of corporate governance as it may apply to the NMHCO. In particular, the governance matters the CRG needs to consider when providing advice to the MHCA Board in relation to the preferred governance framework for the new organisation. Presenting the CRG with these essential matters was an important first step, and further governance advice and training will be offered to CRG members.

¹ Final Report *Scoping Study to Inform the Establishment of a New Peak National Mental Health Consumer Organisation* (2010). Craze Lateral Solutions.

Who are the CRG?

The CRG is populated with talented and skilled mental health consumer advocates committed to shaping a better future. Profiles of CRG members have been included on the NMHCO establishment project website www.mhconsumer.org.au.

Register your interest

The CRG is committed to fostering genuine participation in this process by people with a lived experience of mental health issues and other stakeholders across Australia. Anyone interested in mental health reform and social justice is encouraged to register for updates via the project website. The website will also be used to post important messages that will alert stakeholders to opportunities to participate.

If you would like to keep up to date on the establishment of the NMHCO please register at www.mhconsumer.org.au.

RIP Thomas Szasz

Many of our readers will be familiar with the work of Thomas Szasz, a radical, critical, US psychiatrist vocally opposed to involuntary treatment and the whole concept of “mental illness”. Here’s an excerpt from an online obituary:

*“... he began a distinguished career in 1956, as Professor of Psychiatry at Upstate Medical Center where he retired in 1990, but continued publishing until his death. He argued that what are called mental illnesses are often better described as “problems in living” and he opposed involuntary psychiatric interventions. His reputation in defense of these principles was launched in 1961 with *The Myth of Mental Illness*. He published 35 books, translated into numerous languages, and hundreds of articles in the subsequent 50 years. Recognized worldwide as one of the most important critics of psychiatric coercion and a defender of individual responsibility and freedom ...”*
(from: www.tributes.com/show/Thomas-Stephen-Szasz-94416283).

For an accessible overview, check out Wikipedia or this interview where he is asked to summarise his ideas: www.psychotherapy.net/interview/thomas-szasz.

Some random news from one of our readers – from a Zimbabwean newspaper (2009):

“While transporting mental patients from Harare to Bulawayo, the bus driver stopped at a roadside shebeen (beer hall) for a few beers. When he got back to his vehicle, he found it empty, with the 20 patients nowhere to be seen.

Realizing the trouble he was in if the truth were uncovered, he halted his bus at the next bus stop and offered lifts to those in the queue. Letting 20 people board, he then shut the doors and drove straight to the Bulawayo mental hospital, where he hastily handed over his ‘charges’, warning the nurses that they were particularly excitable.

Staff removed the furious passengers; it was three days later that suspicions were roused by the consistency of stories from the 20. As for the real patients: nothing more has been heard of them and they have apparently blended comfortably back into Zimbabwean society.”

Healing Voices Kickstarter campaign

“HEALING VOICES is a feature-length documentary film examining mainstream mental healthcare and psychiatry in the United States.

What is this film about?

Through the lens of individuals at various stages of their mental health story, HEALING VOICES will investigate topics including the stigma of psychiatric diagnoses, the role of trauma, pharmacology, alternatives to the Western one-size-fits-all medical model, and the power of storytelling in recovery.

Who is steering the ship?

The film is directed by PJ Moynihan of Digital Eyes Film, a US-based independent production company whose work in the field of mental health and recovery alternatives represents the growing body of evidence around progressive ways we as a society can support people experiencing mental health issues.

What was the genesis of this project ?

Moynihan partnered with co-Producer and psychiatric survivor Oryx Cohen to create a short film for a mental health advocacy group that Cohen helped found, to be featured on Forbes.com. Accompanied by a written pitch featuring the personal account of Cohen's friend and fellow activist Will Hall, it became one of the most highly viewed stories on the entire Forbes site for several days running. This impassioned response suggested a critical need to raise the level of dialogue around mental health issues, and gave rise to the concept for a feature-length documentary.

[Ed's note: We interviewed Oryx Cohen for our newsletter in October 2010 – available here: www.ourconsumerplace.com.au/article?id=4909. Oryx and Will Hall co-founded the Freedom Centre together in Northhampton, an AMAZING grassroots community: www.freedom-center.org. Will Hall hosts the very fabulous Madness Radio: www.madnessradio.net – “Voices And Visions from Outside Mental Health.” Oryx works as the Technical Assistance Center Director at the National Empowerment Center – the NEC were the inspiration for Our Consumer Place.]

How can you get involved?

Become a part of this story by submitting your vision for how we should be supporting people experiencing mental health issues, in connection to our rewards program on KickStarter.

Storytelling and personal testimonies are a powerful tool. This campaign is an attempt to create user-generated content from all corners of the globe. Share how things are changing. Share why they are not. Share a message of hope for the future. Let's inform one another.

Excerpts from the ten (10) best submissions will be featured in the film, and all approved content will be published in connection to the marketing and promotion of the movie.

Where does my hard earned money go ?

HEALING VOICES is currently in Production and will be filmed in a naturally occurring timeline over the next calendar year. Funds raised on KickStarter will be used to shoot and post produce a number of scenes for the movie. ...”

The campaign was launched Sep 6, 2012 and ends: Oct 19, 2012. It is an all-or-nothing endeavour, either they raise \$15,000 by Oct 19th and the project goes ahead, or not.

For more information, go to: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1919105634/healing-voices>

Your rights on track

Your Rights on Track is a community legal project supporting people who may be affected by the introduction of **Protective Services Officers** on Melbourne's train stations. People with psychiatric disability who travel on public transport may come in contact with PSOs who have a range of new powers, including the **power to detain a person who appears mentally ill in some circumstances** under section 10 of the Mental Health Act. There are real community concerns that PSOs armed with semi-automatic guns with both quasi-police and ticket inspector powers – but with less training than police – are potentially a real safety risk, especially for vulnerable people.



As well as city loop stations, PSOs have started working at Dandenong, Footscray, North Melbourne, Richmond, Box Hill, Noble Park and Epping stations in recent months and Frankston station is soon to get PSOs.

Our project is monitoring the introduction of PSOs, providing feedback to the Government and Victoria Police, and keeping the media and our community informed of any issues that arise with the PSOs. We've also run our first training session for lawyers and community workers to explain the powers of PSOs and commuters' rights.

Through our project we hope to achieve respectful, accountable and human-rights compliant interactions between PSOs and our community.

We're asking you and/or your organisation and your colleagues to consider supporting the Your Rights on Track Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/PSO.YourRightsOnTrack -potentially 'liking' us and sharing our page on your Facebook wall and perhaps sharing some of our posts from time to time if you think they're interesting and relevant to your page.

Here's some links if you'd like more information about our work:

- Info/background on PSOs' mental health powers: go to the [MHLC's website](#)
- Factsheet for Young People:
www.smartjustice.org.au/cb_pages/files/SJFYP_Protective_Services_Officers.pdf

You can also order wallet-sized cards about knowing your rights with PSOs & how to get legal assistance by emailing the project manager, Michelle McDonnell (FCLC) at: michelle.mcdonnell@fclc.org.au.

Please feel free to contact me if you'd like some more information about the project.

Regards,

Catherine Leslie

Policy Worker/Solicitor, Mental Health Legal Centre Inc.

Email: catherine.leslie@mhlc.org.au (*Please note change of email address);

Phone: (03) 9629 4422; Country Callers: 1800 555 887 Days: Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Web: www.communitylaw.org.au/mentalhealth



Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC)
presents

“One Destination: Different Journeys” A Transcultural Mental Health Forum

The forum will explore and acknowledge the importance of beliefs, cultural practices and traditions dealing with mental illness and wellbeing within ethnic communities. Consumers and carers from ethnic backgrounds will share their lived experiences during the session. The forum will showcase some of the cultural practices and highlight their importance to people from different communities.

An Expo of Mental Health and Multicultural Services will also be on display

The Forum is for:

Clinicians, Community Mental Health Providers, Multicultural Service Providers.

When: Wednesday 17 October, 2012, 8.45am - 2.00pm

Where: Bell City Event Centre, 215 Bell Street, Preston

Cost: \$80

Cost of Stall: \$200

Cost for Consumers/ Carers: Free

Speakers will include:

Karen Toohey Acting Commissioner - Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

Mr Arnold Zable - Award winning Australian writer, educator and human rights advocate.

Consumers and Carers - from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

For registration queries:

Anastasia Meimeteas on 9480 1666 or info@adec.org.au

For stall queries:

Zainab Karmile on 9480 1666 or student@adec.org.au

Registrations close on 8th October 2012



Women and Mental Health Network Victoria job:

Context

The Women's Mental Health Network Victoria (WMHNV), ... has been established since 1988. The role of the network is to advocate for gender sensitive services and policies that are responsive to the needs of women who experience mental health issues.

Membership of the WMHNV is open to women consumers, carers, mental health service providers and other interested women. ...

The Training Resource Development Officer is a short term position responsible for the development and trialling of a Gender Sensitive Training Resource for implementation across the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Services in Victoria.

Position Overview

The Training Resource Development Officer, working fulltime for seven months, will be responsible for the development of a Department of Health funded Gender Sensitive Training Resource which will support the integration of the Department of Health's "Service guideline on gender sensitivity and safety. Promoting a holistic approach to wellbeing" into the mental health and AOD services in Victoria. The aim of the project is to enable staff and managers of mental health and AOD services to more appropriately recognise and respond to the gender needs of women, men, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex consumers, carers and their families. The training resource will be inclusive of the development and trialling of a two day workshop and the production of the necessary resources and workbooks associated with the training. ...

Further information

For further information about this position contact Cheryl Sullivan on 0417 386 706 or by email vicwmhn@vicserv.org.au ...

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: Monday 1st October 2012

PEOPLE WITH A LIVED EXPERIENCE ARE INVITED TO APPLY.



THUMBS UP/THUMBS DOWN

1. **THUMBS UP:** to clinicians and workers who work in ways that honour the wisdom that comes from lived experience.
2. **THUMBS UP:** to Shery Mead receiving a Voice award – see the news on page 11. Shery Mead was the creator of Intentional Peer Support and an incredible visionary in our consumer/survivor community.
3. **THUMBS DOWN:** to those who harbour low expectations for people with psych diagnoses. Shery Mead, for example, was told that she would never work again!
4. **THUMBS DOWN:** to those unexpected moments when past experiences resurface and threaten to flip us back into past emotional spaces.
5. **THUMBS DOWN:** to services that employ consumer consultants for 1 day per fortnight, expecting no direct contact with consumers who access the services.
6. **THUMBS UP:** to Joan the one woman telephone counsellor and carer from Tamworth. She is apparently more helpful than many of the professional services.
7. **THUMBS UP:** to those who are close to receiving a letter from the Queen (apparently, you get a letter if you get 10 diagnoses ... thanks Indi!)

8. **THUMBS DOWN:** to the hacking, slashing and attempted silencing of our colleagues in QLD – the government there is trying to make organisations funded by the Department of Health sign an agreement not to engage in advocacy or promote organisations engaged in advocacy!
9. **THUMBS UP:** to connection. Connection is an antidote to fear. Fear leads to coercion; connection opens up new possibilities.
10. **THUMBS DOWN:** to last minute computer failures, photocopier dramas, etc!

OUR CONSUMER PLACE UPDATE: WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO?

Psychobabble

The entries are in, the judge (Janet Meagher) is waiting... With nearly 1300 entries, this will be a fierce competition. Happily, we will be sharing more than just the winning entries! (There really is enormous creativity and wit in this community! I wish we could share some of the entries now, but am learning patience).

IPS training

Intentional Peer Support training was run September 3rd-7th. This was the first time Our Consumer Place has run the training. Tyneal Hodges (from Brook RED in QLD) came down to co-facilitate with us. There were 19 participants, predominantly from Melbourne, but with 3 from interstate (2 from a consumer-run organisation in Darwin!) and a posse from Bendigo. Many of this group had previously participated in Merinda's storytelling workshops. We will be running this training again, it's just a matter of planning for sustainability.

The Mental Health Services conference

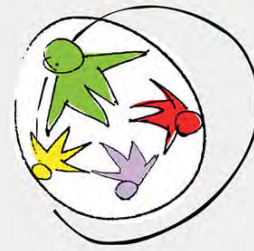
This year the Mental Health Services conference was in Cairns. It's a hard life sharing ideas, dreams and experiences with wonderful people in paradise!

Merinda ran a workshop on storytelling with about 45 people. Flick's talk on the consumer day (on Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed as it relates to consumers – a topic suggested by Ross O'Donovan from the Cairns organising committee) will be available soon, either on the website or in the newsletter. And Flick also co-presented a workshop with Emma Ladd from the Mental Illness Fellowship on the role of allies in mental health. We hope to run this workshop again.



Our Consumer Place's poster explaining what OCP does (juggles lots of different balls!)

Our Community Manifesto



WHAT WE BELIEVE:

- ▶ We believe in the power of the community sector
- ▶ We believe in human capital
- ▶ We believe in equality
- ▶ We believe women have equal rights to leadership roles
- ▶ We believe technology is a key to accelerating our reform agenda
- ▶ We believe laughter is good
- ▶ We believe work can be a place to make friends for life
- ▶ We believe business is good and can do good
- ▶ We believe treating people with respect gains respect
- ▶ We believe mayhem is not only healthy but critical

WHAT WE DO:

- ▶ We build stronger communities
- ▶ We create, curate and share knowledge and experiences
- ▶ We listen, then we act
- ▶ We revolutionise markets
- ▶ We ignite and accelerate
- ▶ We convene and connect
- ▶ We put back into the community that we work with

HOW WE WORK:

- ▶ We strive for fairness
- ▶ We are failure tolerant
- ▶ We take risks
- ▶ We question authority
- ▶ We use our balance sheet to create social change
- ▶ We believe in a work environment that allows for an authentic life balance
- ▶ We accept increments, but strive for revolution
- ▶ Ethics, inspiration and innovation are at our core
- ▶ We value our flat structure: we share the cleaning as well as the decision-making
- ▶ We celebrate success and learn from our mistakes
- ▶ We are dogmatic and passionate

OUR IDEAL ENVIRONMENT - THE EDGE OF CHAOS:

"The estuary region where rigid order and random chaos meet and generate high levels of adaptation, complexity and creativity."

READY, FIRE, AIM