

**Barwon Health Mental Health and Drugs & Alcohol Services
Family & Friends Newsletter**

Caring Connections



December 2011 and January 2012

Carers, Family and Friends Support Groups

Thursday December 1st: Dual Diagnosis & Mental Health Carer Education in the activities room at Barwon Health Community Health Services 104 – 108 Bellarine Hwy Newcomb from 1.00 – 3.00. Note new time – this enables people with school age children to attend our meeting – all carers/family welcome.

Our guest presenter this afternoon is Jill Mann from Barwon Health 'Respecting patient choices' - Advance Care Planning program. Jill will speak to us from 1.30 – 2.00 and will provide information packs. There will be time for questions.

The long holiday season with its expectations and demands can be a very stressful time. 'How do you and your family deal with problems at Christmas time?' After Jill's session we will discuss the tricky issues and stresses of the 'festive' season with Stephen Mihaly.



Thursday December 8th: Creative Carers – an excursion to the Victoria Market. We will catch the 9.19 train from Marshall, 9.29 from Geelong – at each person's own cost and return on the 3.59 train from Melbourne arriving in Geelong at 4.55 & Marshall at 5.09. These are off peak travel times.

Thursday December 15th: Cubby House – 2.00 – 4.00 in the St Albans Park Uniting Church hall, Wilsons Rd, St Albans Park. Bring a plate of Xmas fare to share.

Thursday December 22nd: Sweet Peas will meet at 2.00pm for afternoon tea and peer support at Ellen's house. Bring a plate of goodies to share as this will be our Xmas break-up.



We extend our thanks to Carer respite services for funding individual and group carer activities this year. Special group events included creative art & craft sessions, pampering at Karingal House, Marshall, the fabulous Carers Carnival and accommodation at Sebel/Lady Bay for 14 carers attending the Rural Carers conference in Warrnambool.

2012

Thursday January 5th – Dual Diagnosis and Mental health carers, family and friends – will meet in the activities room at Barwon Health Community Health Services at Newcomb from 1.00 – 3.00. Bring your lunch and share your experiences of Christmas & New Year. We will also plan our education sessions for 2012. These will include a ‘changing behaviours’ program for small groups with Stephen Mihaly. At our February meeting Stephen will introduce the concept and format of these sessions.

Thursday January 12th – Creative Carers meet from 1.00 – 3.00 in the activities room at Newcomb. We will make (and enjoy) pizzas and greek salad as a pleasant antidote to turkey, ham and Christmas pudding.

Thursday January 19th – Cubby House – We meet for afternoon tea and peer support at the St Albans Park Uniting Church hall in Wilsons Rd St Albans Park from 2.00 – 3.00. Bring home grown vegetables, preserves, home baking or books for sale to aid the carer card funds.

Thursday January 26th - Australia Day and a public holiday - there will be NO Sweet Peas this month.

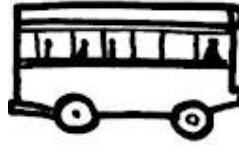


Rural Carers Conference:

The rural carers conference in Warrnambool was an outstanding day facilitated by the effervescent Maria Bohan, ex CEO of Carers Victoria. Dr Craig Hassed spoke on ‘the Essence of Self Care’ and Ruth Vine unraveled some of the changes and improvements to Mental Health policy especially in relation to clients with complex needs...aspects of management and support in the community. The afternoon sessions included: Imaging having Asperger’s syndrome (Dr. Richard Eisenmajer PhD), Behaviour Management Options for Dementia & Aged Care (Dr. Catriona Lorang PhD), Harm Minimization for Relationships: family carers & Borderline Personality Disorder (Dr. Peter McKenzie PhD), Is someone you about using drugs? (Angela Ireland), the impacts of difficult behaviours on families (parents/carers/siblings) of children with a disability (Christine Cameron) Unfortunately it was only possible to attend one 2hour session. Approximately 200 carers attended this conference – providing a great opportunity for informal exchange of ideas during the lunch and afternoon tea breaks. Barwon carers thoroughly enjoyed their extended time together, the luxurious accommodation

Forthcoming events:

A combined carer and consumer bus trip to the VICSERV conference in May 2012



Mental Health Council of Australia Bulletins for this month:

MHCA Bulletin no 34:

- 1 Mental Health Matters: An update on reform from the Minister for Mental Health
- 2 Labour's new-look Northern Territory intervention
- 3 Uneven Global Progress on Treatment of Mental Illness
- 4 New community mental health plan for Queensland
- 5 The reasons for alcohol misuse in bipolar disorder: a systematic review
- 6 Mental Health Atlas 2011
- 7 Mental Health Services in Australia – AIHW
- 8 Sick folk subjected to a sick, terrifying mental health law
- 9 Allan Fels appointed Mental Health Commissioner
- 10 Funding – MH Conference *and* Young Carers Festivals

9 Allan Fels appointed Mental Health Commissioner

MHCA Media Release

16 October 2011

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) warmly welcomes the appointment of Professor Allan Fels, AO as Chairman of the Mental Health Commission.

Allan Fels is a Patron of the Mental Health Council of Australia and a long standing advocate for mental health carers and consumers. Professor Fels was Dean of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and also Chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission from 1995 until 30 June 2003. Prior to that he was Chairman of the Trade Practices Commission from 1991 to 1995 and Chairman of the Prices Surveillance Authority from 1989 to 1992.

“Allan Fels has championed mental health reform and governance issues for many years and his work with the MHCA and other organisations makes him an ideal person to lead the new Mental Health Commission,” said Frank Quinlan, the CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia.

“Professor Fels will bring his years of experience on administration, leadership, and advocacy to this position and his appointment is warmly welcomed by the mental health sector.

“The establishment of a Mental Health Commission is a key part of the Government’s mental health reform agenda, which includes delivering a Ten Year Roadmap to reform. The MHCA looks forward to working with Professor Fels in achieving this milestone in mental health,” Mr Quinlan said.

Media Contact: *Simon Tatz on 0402 613 745 or 02 – 6285 3100*

MHCA Bulletin no 35:

- 1 Leading health organisations demand immediate action on mental health standards and immigration detention
- 2 Daily dose of dairy boosts mental performance
- 3 Men are lost, confused, insecure - and that's good to know, say therapists
- 4 Bipolar caregivers
- 5 Mental health care—the economic imperative - UK
- 6 Social networking used to improve mental health in young
- 7 The psychopath in us all
- 8 Women out of the pan, and in the fire
- 9 Memoirs about schizophrenia spurs others to come forward - USA
- 10 The public deserves better protection than this system

2 Daily dose of dairy boosts mental performance

A new study suggests frequent intake of dairy foods is linked to better mental performance.

Researchers from the University of South Australia and America's University of Maine analysed dietary habits and mental function of 972 US adults.

Consuming dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt at least once a day was associated with greater performance in mental functions including verbal memory, visual-spatial memory, organisation and abstract reasoning, compared with those who consumed dairy less frequently.

Less-frequent consumption of dairy foods was associated with significantly more depressive symptoms, lower folate levels and an increased prevalence of cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure.

While the underlying mechanisms of dairy's benefits on mental performance are unknown, the authors suggest the unique nutrient content might play a role.

"Dairy foods contain a number of important nutrients such as calcium, whey protein, vitamin D, magnesium and phosphorus," said lead researcher Georgina Crichton.

"There is evidence that these nutrients might assist in weight and fat reduction, and in the control of blood pressure and diabetes.

"As our findings remained significant after controlling for cardiovascular risk factors, perhaps some of these nutrients are having a direct effect on brain function," Ms Crichton said.

The researchers reviewed earlier research and identified eight other studies reporting associations between dairy food intake and mental function.

They noted that the studies consistently show greater intakes of milk and dairy products are associated with better general cognitive (mental) function.

Dairy Australia Dietitian, Glenys Zucco said these new results were promising and warranted further investigation.

"Mental decline and dementia is an increasing problem for Australia's ageing population. But growing evidence suggests lifestyle and health factors such as dietary intake could promote better mental function," said Ms Zucco.

"Higher intakes of dairy foods have been shown to provide a number of health benefits, and promoting better mental performance might be one to add to the list in the future," she said.

Media enquiries:

Glenys Zucco — Dietitian, Dairy Australia

<http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Standard-Items/News/Nutrition-News/Daily-dose-of-dairy-boosts-mental-performance.aspx>

4 Bipolar caregivers

Bipolar disorder (previously called manic depression) affects not only the life of the person with bipolar but the lives of those who care for them. Close family and friends (bipolar carers or caregivers) can be a primary source of support for a person with bipolar disorder. Please scroll through the topics listed in the menu at the top of this page to select information about bipolar disorder and suggestions for dealing with it that are relevant to you.

Welcome to bipolarcaregivers.org

We aim to make bipolarcaregivers.org a useful, easily accessible information website for caregivers of people with bipolar disorder. On this website you will find:

Information and suggestions for caregivers about:

- What is bipolar and how it is treated and managed.
- Ways to help a person with bipolar disorder who is 18 years or over.
- Ways caregivers can take care of themselves, deal with the bipolar disorder and the personal impact it has on them.

[The information on the website can also be downloaded as a report and useful reference:]

<http://bipolarcaregivers.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/guide-for-caregivers.pdf>

MHCA Bulletin no 36

1 Advice from NICE aims to improve commissioning of services for people with common mental health disorders – UK

2 'Unfinished care revolution' lets disadvantaged groups down - UK

3 National project to address LGBTI mental health and suicide prevention

4 Pressure to leave hospital early blamed

5 Practitioners brace for mental health cuts

6 Addressing the needs of siblings of children with disability or chronic illness

7 Mental health crisis linked to housing crisis - UK

8 Mental illness redefined

9 Good news for carers

10 Indigenous health roadmap to be developed

MHCA Bulletin no 37

The Mental Health Carers Survey forms the major part of my work at the MHCA and is now OPEN. The online survey available to all mental health carers and will remain open until Christmas Day – if you are a mental health carer please complete the survey or if you work with carers please pass on this link: <http://www.surveymoz.com/s3/569049/Mental-Health-Carers-Survey-2011-12>

The survey is part of a cumulative research project into the lives of mental health carers. Each year mental health carers are asked how their life has been affected by being a mental health carer during the previous 12 months. The findings are published and widely distributed to politicians, government departments, carers, consumers, workers, clinicians and bureaucrats. Mental health policy and projects are influenced by what the collective voice of carers has to say about their life and the life of the person they care for. The 2011-12 survey is based on the 15 major issues affecting mental health carers identified by mental health carers throughout Australia in 2008 and 2009 and follows on from work completed in: [Adversity to Advocacy, the lives and hopes of mental health carers, 2009](#) and [Mental Health Carers Report 2010](#).

The Mental Health Carers Survey 2011-12 will be more accessible to carers than ever before. This year, in order to hear from more carers, and those who may have difficulty completing the survey there will be:

1. A separate Young Mental Health Carers survey based on Facebook – details soon
2. A survey in 4 languages other than English (released early in the New Year)
3. Workshops with regional and remote Aboriginal communities

The report, which collates and analyses the survey responses will be more detailed and complete than any so far. Please encourage all mental health carers to take part.

If you have problems in getting information to carers within the deadline 9th November – 25th December please email: Linda.Rosie@MHCA.org.au

If you would prefer to enter details on a paper survey please contact Carolyn.Conaghan@MHCA.org.au who will be happy to email a printable version.

Other things in this Bulletin: humour is rare in the Bulletin – but item one should make you smile. Item four, based on the *Housing First* model, gives hope to all who struggle with a mental illness and accommodation

MHCA Bulletin 38

- 1 However you feel, they've got a name for it
- 2 Psychologists fume over additions to diagnostic manual
- 3 Forensic mental health services lacking
- 4 The Doorway housing and support program
- 5 Creativity is associated with mental disorder – UK, Sweden
- 6 Sybil's psychosis -a fraud's slip
- 7 Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services
- 8 Organisations named to drive primary health care reform
- 9 Depression is not the only mental illness we should be talking about
- 10 Ockam's Razor: Mulling up cannabis and psychosis

Ongoing - Mental Health Carers Forum

If you are a carer and would like to talk with other mental health carers about issues of concern to you please complete the form at: <http://www.mhca.org.au/carerform/index.php>

A Miscellany of bits & pieces and items of interest:

**Ipad,
Iwant,
Iwaste.**

“There have been 37 million electronic devices dumped in landfill since 2008...in Australia alone.”

For more about the e-waste crisis, visit 3things.org.au/technology

Be active for your mental health: a MHCA fact sheet

Good mental health helps us to more fully enjoy and appreciate the people and environment around us. We respond better to the stresses and challenges of daily life, we are more creative, use our abilities to the fullest and make the most of opportunities when our mental health is strong.

To build and maintain your mental health there are three things you can do:

Act – Strive to keep yourself as active as possible, physically, socially and mentally— walk, swim, read...

Belong –Connect to your community — join a group, chat to a neighbour, meet a friend...

Commit – Look to the future and have a go — take a challenge, get involved, volunteer...

Activity and exercise has many psychological benefits

- It can help reduce anxiety. People who exercise report feeling less stressed or nervous.
- Physical exercise helps to counteract the withdrawal, inactivity and feelings of hopelessness that are a feature of depression.
- Moods such as tension fatigue and anger are all positively affected by exercise.
- Exercising can improve the way you perceive your physical condition, athletic abilities and body image.
- Exercise can bring you into contact with other people

Mental fitness helps us to achieve and sustain a mentally healthy state

- A realistic attitude gives us a sense of perspective and flexibility, and the resilience we need to endure shocks, hardship and change that are part of everyone's life.
- Self-esteem and confidence comes from focusing on the qualities we have that makes us a good friend, a valued colleague, a loving parent or family member.
- Emotional support with family and friends builds support networks through which we receive help and, in turn help others.
- Mental activities such as reading a book, solving crosswords or playing a musical instrument can improve our mental agility and promotes our overall wellness.

Simple ways to practice your ABCs

“Act”

- **Exercise** – regular physical activity improves psychological well-being and can reduce depression and anxiety.
- **Enjoy hobbies** – taking up a hobby brings balance to your life by allowing you do something you enjoy and it also keeps your brain active.
- **Treat yourself well** – cook yourself a good meal, have a bubble bath, see a movie, call a friend or relative you haven't called for ages, sit on a park bench and take in your surrounding.

“Belong”

- **Invite** – ask someone new to come along.
- **Share a laugh** – life often gets too serious, so when you hear or see something that makes you smile or laugh share it with someone you know.
- **Do one thing at a time** – for example when you are out for a walk or spending time with friends, turn off your mobile phone and stop making that mental “to do list”.

“Commit”

- **“Collect” positive emotional moments** – recall times when you have experienced pleasure, comfort, tenderness, confidence, or other positive emotions.
- **Learn ways to cope with negative thoughts** – don't block negative thoughts but learn how to interrupt them and not let them take over.
- **Set personal goals** – for example finish that book you started three years ago, walk around the block every day, learn to knit or play bridge, call your friends instead of waiting for the phone to ring.
- **Keep a journal (or even talk to the wall!)** – expressing yourself after a stressful day can help you gain perspective, release tension, and even boost your body's resistance to illness.
- **Volunteer** – volunteering helps others, makes us feel good about ourselves, widens social networks, provides new learning experiences, and can bring balance to people's lives.

Act, belong, commit

OUR CONSUMER PLACE

Our Consumer Place is a groundbreaking mental health resource centre run by consumers. They are funded by the Department of Health (Victoria) and auspiced by Our Community. They have just released the first booklet in a series for mental health consumers in Victoria. Titled *So you have a 'mental illness' ... what now?* is an introductory booklet for people who have recently been diagnosed with a mental illness and an introduction for people who have

just become aware of the consumer movement or who have found recovery through fighting to make things better for those consumers who come next.

This is a very different booklet. It has been written entirely by consumers for consumers. As they say, this is information people would never be able to get from anywhere else.

There are another nine booklets due from Our Consumer Place and it may be picked up by other states. Page | 11

All booklets are available in hardback in small quantities or at cost price for larger orders. The booklets can be downloaded from the website

<http://www.ourconsumerplace.com.au/consumer/index> and photocopied.

Some day trips & ideas for the holiday season

AT HOME:

Turn off the television, look in the cupboards and dust off the board games – invite some friends or family - have some fun & play...scrabble, monopoly, upwords, trivial pursuit, dominoes, chess, draughts, card games, jigsaw puzzles etc. If you had a big clean out and rid yourself of these unused games – visit the op-shops. They often have some in store.

Have a picnic in your garden

Seek out and re-read books you have enjoyed

Go to a live theatre performance



Drive or take a train to the beautiful historic town of Williamstown. (Train to Newport then suburban line train to Williamstown) Walk along the waters edge, the botanical gardens, along the Strand or take a ferry to Southbank, Melbourne – 2 hour round trip. There is a great range of eateries and foreshore lawns for a picnic.

Take the train to Warrnambool, Colac, Camperdown or Terang – train leaves Geelong at 8.20am returns to Geelong at 7.27

Visit Melbourne and choose from the following:

Myer Store Christmas windows in Bourke Street

Scienceworks at Newport

Federation Square – opposite Flinders Street railway station

National Gallery in St Kilda Road

Melbourne Museum in Nicholson St, Carlton - behind the Exhibition Buildings

Melbourne Aquarium, Flinders Street

Wander through Melbourne's beautiful arcades and back lanes – Royal & Block arcades and Hardware Street.

Geelong area:

Botanical Gardens

Eastern Beach

Bollard Walk

Geelong galleries

Historical Society – next to Geelong library

Wombat Gully nursery

Van Loon's nursery
Barwon Booksellers

RAAF base Museum at Point Cook
Fairy Park Anakie
Queenscliff
Inverleigh
Steiglitz and the Brisbane Ranges

Sweet Chilli & Lime Mixed Vegetable Salad – an attractive & yummy summer salad
You will need:

200 gram asparagus, trimmed and sliced
100 gram fresh baby corn, sliced lengthways
1 medium red capsicum, thinly sliced
100 gram shitake mushrooms, thinly sliced
1 lebanese cucumber, deseeded and thinly sliced
12 green onions, thinly sliced
100 gram bean shoots
1 red thai chilli, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons finely chopped coriander leaves
Dressing:
2 tablespoons lime juice
2 teaspoons sesame oil
2 teaspoons fish sauce
1 garlic clove, crushed

Cook asparagus and corn separately, until tender crisp.
Drain and combine asparagus, corn, capsicum, mushrooms, cucumber, onion, sprouts, chilli and coriander.
Whisk together dressing remaining ingredients.

Drizzle over salad and toss gently to combine.



For carer support and information about mental health services:

Ring Pamela – 5226 7609 or 0437 663 845

Jennifer – 5260 3264 or 0401 695 730

We both work part time so leave a message and we will call you back as soon as possible

For respite services:

Ring Elizabeth – FREECALL 1800 052 222