

20 December 2012

SEASONS GREETINGS FROM THE NSW MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION

This letter is to wish you a very happy and safe holiday season from myself and the team at the Mental Health Commission of NSW. I also want to take this opportunity to give you an update on our work and to send my best wishes for 2013.

It is hard to believe that almost five months have passed since I began my role as Commissioner. As the year winds down, I want to acknowledge the efforts of our interim team who have worked tirelessly since July to establish the Commission as a fully functioning organisation. The past month has seen our permanent senior positions advertised and interviewed for, and the selection processes for our Deputy Commissioners and Community Advisory Council well underway. We expect to have these important roles and our permanent senior staff in place early next year. These past months have also seen our vision towards NSW mental health reform taking shape with several pieces of research work and our strategic planning underway.

Because collaboration and consultation are at the core of our endeavours, 2012 has also seen the Commission undertake building work to transform our office into a more welcoming, inclusive and accessible space. We hope these improvements will make you more comfortable when you visit us or attend a forum here in Gladesville.

In other news, we are unwrapping our website. As another consultation avenue, the website will be evolving over the next few months. In order to make this digital space as useful as possible we welcome your comments and feedback. Please be sure to visit us online at www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au for regular updates on our activities and progress on the mission for reform.

This year a new path has opened up for mental health reform in Australia. The National Mental Health Commission handed down the first ever national mental health Report Card, and the Council of Australian Governments released the National Mental Health Roadmap. These are important steps towards national mental health reform and we look forward to maintaining the Commission's momentum into the New Year to achieve a rejuvenated NSW mental health system that supports people to remain well in the community. Foremost, we want to continue to foster a culture that places people affected by mental illness, their families, carers and other stakeholders at the front and centre of all decisions made. On this note, we would like to pass on a sincere thank you to all those who have talked with us, sent their ideas through, and made us feel welcomed over these initial months.

Lastly, I know that for some people this time of year is not always as jolly as the cards and carols tell us. Not everyone lives the image that is portrayed in the media and the stresses and anxieties of the period can be overwhelming. There are always lots of free public events around December. Look in your local paper for community activities and council celebrations, or why not offer someone the gift of your time, by offering a home cooked meal or hand in their garden. This is a great time of year to get involved with your local

community and meet new friends. Remember, if you need some extra support over the holidays you can call Lifeline on 13 11 14, Mensline on 1300 789 978 or the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.

Once again, my warmest regards for the holiday season. Enjoy the break, relax, be safe, look after each other, and I look forward to catching up again in 2013.

Yours sincerely



John Feneley
Commissioner