



Welcome to the Commission's newsletter with updates on our activities and other mental health news.



Award winner Gabrielle Le Bon with John Feneley, NSW Mental Health Commissioner

Peer support champion wins Community Award

A project that has been encouraging young people from the NSW North Coast to see their experience of mental illness and recovery as a strength and to reach out and mentor others has been recognised in the Mental Health *Matters* Awards this year.

NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley presented Gabrielle Le Bon of Lismore (pictured right) with the inaugural Mental Health *Matters* Community Champion Award at NSW Parliament House on 1 October 2013, for her role in the Lived Experience Project.

The Lived Experience Project, a multi-agency initiative funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, supported 25 people with a lived experience of mental illness and recovery to complete a Certificate IV in Community Services Work and to engage in mentoring relationships. To date the program has found ongoing employment for more than 75 per cent of participants.

Strategic Plan

The NSW Government has asked the Mental Health Commission of NSW to prepare a draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW, reflecting the experiences, hopes and priorities of people across the state.

Since late last year we have been meeting with the community and representative groups to hear people's perspectives and ideas for change, and in August we started the process of working with stakeholders to shape the Strategic Plan itself by holding a workshop in August in Sydney.

The workshop generated ideas for reform that will now be refined further with the assistance of the hundreds of people who have registered to be involved in the planning process. A further series of workshops in regional centres and with Aboriginal communities was held in September and October.

The Commission is now collating all the feedback received from the workshops, online submissions and other correspondence.

Events

- ❖ **Mental Health Month** October 2013 *'Kindness: little acts, big impacts!'*
- ❖ **Anti Poverty Week** 13-19 October 2013
Help fight poverty and hardship! Organise an activity during the Week or take part in an activity organised by others.
- ❖ **Postnatal Depression Awareness Week** 17- 23 November 2013 *'Parents are People too: looking after your family includes looking after you.'*
- ❖ **World Hearing Voices Conference** 20-22 November 2013 *'Journeys to understanding: sharing experience, expertise and wisdom.'* Conference to be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

From the Commissioner



Welcome to the first issue of our update - Living well in our community.

This newsletter will be a way of updating you on our news and news from the wider mental health sector. You'll be receiving this email if you registered to be part of the development of the draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW.

If you have an event you'd like us to announce or an idea for other news and articles please let us know.

We'd also like to include stories from people with lived experience of mental illness, their carers and families in this newsletter so if you're happy to share your story please email: socialmedia@mhc.nsw.gov.au

We aim to send this newsletter out every two months, so the next issue will be out in December. Ideas for the next issue will need to be sent to us by 25 November. Read and enjoy!

John Feneley, Commissioner

HeAL program to be adopted across NSW

The Healthy Active Lives (HeAL) program principles will be adopted by NSW Government for young people with severe mental illness. The Commission congratulates Dr Jackie Curtis and her team at the Bondi Early Psychosis Program who led the program's development.

The announcement was made at a two-day workshop held at Westmead Hospital by NSW Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries. Mr Humphries said, "I am very pleased to announce that the NSW Government is adopting the principles of the HeAL program, because I believe that every single young person experiencing a first episode of psychosis has a number of rights."

"These important principles ensure young people with psychosis are treated with the dignity they deserve and will combat the discrimination and prejudice that often prevents young people who experience psychosis from leading healthy, active lives," said Mr Humphries.

The Healthy Active Lifestyles consensus statement is an agreement between a group of clinicians, service users, family members and researchers from eleven countries who have joined forces to improve the physical health of young people who experience psychosis.

Compared to the general population, young people experiencing psychosis are more likely to die prematurely from cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders such as obesity and diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, certain cancers and infectious illnesses.

The HeAL program aims to reverse the trend of people with severe mental illness dying early by tackling risks for future physical illnesses pro-actively and much earlier.

Dr Curtis said "Early intervention to prevent obesity would prevent the 'seeding' of cardiovascular and diabetes risk that destroys future health. Essentially, we want people with severe mental illness to enjoy the same health as their young peers and not experience a double disability of mental illness and obesity."



Commissioner has a ball on R U OK? Day

What do you get when you cross the Commissioner with the Minister in a ball pit at Customs House? R U OK? Day!

The NSW Mental Health Commissioner, John Feneley, joined Kevin Humphries, the NSW Minister for Mental Health, in a pop-up conversation ball pit for a chat and to kick off the activities for R U OK? Day.

The ball pit had a number of simple conversation starters with the two talking about who inspires them, how have they changed in the last five years, what magic power they would like and what is the best advice they've ever received; the Commissioner said his mother always told him 'everything looks better in the morning, so don't make any rash decisions at night.'



The fifth annual R U OK? Day encouraged Australians to look out for friends, family and colleagues and ask, 'are you okay?' The aim is to inspire meaningful conversations across the country to help reduce suicide, which is the leading cause of death for people in Australia aged between 15 and 44 years.

“We are all very busy, but it takes no time at all to ask R U OK? This simple question could make the difference in someone’s day, or even save their life,” said Mr Feneley.

R U OK? Foundation CEO Janina Nearn said a conversation could make a real difference to how someone was feeling, and represented a positive approach to suicide prevention.

To inspire others to start a conversation, people can also share the fun and quirky desktop and mobile-friendly Facebook application available at www.ruokconversationstarter.com

The Commission is developing a toolkit that empowers local communities to respond to suicide, due for release in October. It will be an integral component of the Small Town Suicide Prevention Strategy that is being developed and implemented as part of the NSW Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan.

Anyone who is experiencing distress is encouraged to seek help at Lifeline 13 11 14.

Mental health organisations united on World Suicide Prevention Day

On World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD), Tuesday 10 September, the National Coalition for Suicide Prevention (NCSP), made up of 25 mental health organisations including the NSW Mental Health Commission, came together with a united voice on suicide prevention in Australia.

The theme for WSPD is Stigma: A Major Barrier to Suicide Prevention, and aims to lift the cloud of stigma that prevents people from seeking help when they are in trouble, and causes further distress for the loved ones of those lost to suicide.

Speaking at the launch event, CEO for Suicide Prevention Australia, Sue Murray said “We believe that through national and local efforts, a difference to the lives of many will be made.” Peak body Suicide Prevention Australia is leading the NCSP, which recently launched its first initiative - Vote 1 Suicide Prevention. You can cast your vote at: www.wspd.org.au

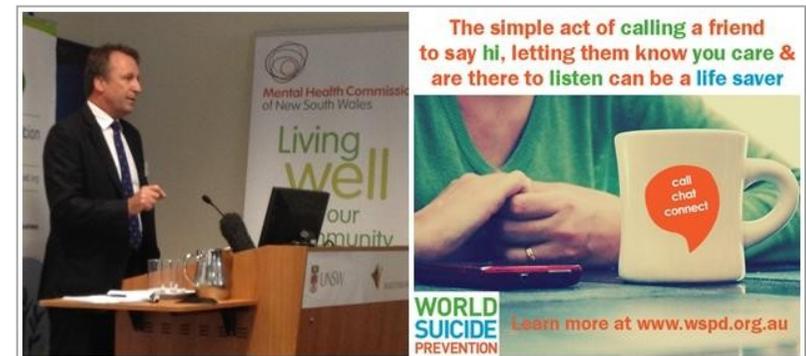
The Black Dog Institute hosted the official launch of WSPD, where Professor Helen Christensen, its Executive Director, called for participants willing to take part in new research. The ‘Healthy Thinking’ trial is offering people a confidential self-help service that can be accessed at any time of the day or night by anyone with internet access. Australians who have experienced suicidal thoughts are invited to register their interest in the ‘Healthy Thinking’ Trial.

The NSW Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries, officially launched WSPD and spoke about two resources currently in development. The first, an online resource called Conversations Matter, is being developed in a partnership between the Hunter Institute of Mental Health and NSW Health. The site aims to support community discussion about suicide. Background information is available here: www.conversationsmatter.com.au

Minister Humphries also spoke about the *Small Town Community Response to Suicide Toolkit*, which the Commission is developing in partnership with Suicide Prevention Australia) and is due for release in October.

More information about World Suicide Prevention Day can be found at www.wspd.org.au

Anyone who is experiencing distress is encouraged to seek help at Lifeline 13 11 14.



Living well

TOP TIPS

To help maintain mental wellbeing*:

- Sleep well.
- Enjoy healthy food.
- Plan and prioritise your day.
- Tune into the music you love.
- Cut down on bad food and booze.
- Switch off your devices and tune out.
- Hang out with people who make you feel good.
- Join in, participate and connect.
- Exercise your body and mind.
- Seek advice and support when you need it.

*Thanks to the [Mental Health Council of Australia](#) for these useful tips



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