



update

LIVING WELL IN OUR COMMUNITY

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



Commission acknowledges Ministers of Mental Health

On Tuesday 6 May, the Commission hosted a reception for the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, the Minister for Mental Health and Assistant Minister for Health, the Hon. Jai Rowell and the Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water and Minister for Western NSW, the Hon. Kevin Humphries.

The reception was an opportunity for the Commission to welcome the new Minister for Mental Health, Jai Rowell and to acknowledge and thank the former Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries for his work in the sector.

Addressing the guests, NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley said the gathering comes at an important time in the Commission's history.

"Over the past 22 months we have seen the establishment of the Commission and extensive consultation across NSW to develop the draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW, with a lot of

support from the community, government, mental health and other sectors to achieve this large task. *(continues over page)*

“During this time many people have participated in the process and are still actively involved today. As we move into the next part of the journey, with the Government’s consideration of the plan, we are delighted to welcome Minister Rowell to the portfolio and we look forward to working with him in the future.” said Commissioner Feneley.

Pictured above from left: Commissioner John Feneley, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, the Hon. Jai Rowell, the Hon. Kevin Humphries

[Read more on our website](#)

Strategic Plan

The NSW Mental Health Commission has now completed the development of the draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW. The Plan has been submitted to the Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research and the Hon. Jai Rowell MP, Minister for Mental Health and Assistant Minister for Health. To accompany the Plan, the Commission has also prepared a report on the engagement with community, the mental health sector, and broader services and government agencies.

The Plan has been written to reflect the needs, wishes and priorities of people living with mental illness, and their families and carers, to live contributing lives on the terms they choose as they work towards their own recovery. The Plan proposes a vision for mental health reform over a ten year period and establishes actions to guide the first phase of that reform.

The Plan is a substantial and comprehensive document that provides analysis, and recommendations for reform, of a broad range of services provided to people who experience mental illness and their families and carers. These recommendations will have an impact across the full spectrum of government services and beyond into the non government and private sectors.

The Commission anticipates that it may take a few months for the Government to fully consider the Plan, and looks forward to working closely with Ministers Skinner and Rowell and heads of government agencies through the process of consideration of the Plan to ensure an integrated whole of government response.

The Commission extends thanks to all of the people, families and organisations who contributed their stories, experiences, information and wisdom to both the Plan and Report. The development of these documents would not have been possible without this assistance. **Read more on the [Strategic Plan](#).**

Events

- ❖ [Hunter Institute of Mental Health Forum](#)
4 June, Newcastle
- ❖ [4th Australian Postvention Conference 2014](#)
5-7 June, Sydney
- ❖ [Men’s Health Week](#)
9-15 June
- ❖ [Mindout LGBTI Mental Health Conference 2014](#)
26 -27 June, Sydney
- ❖ [Mana Allawah Aboriginal Summit](#)
17 July, Sydney
- ❖ [National Suicide Prevention Conference 2014](#)
23-25 July, Perth
- ❖ [Mental Health Matters Awards now open](#)
Nominations close Monday 28 July

See [more events on our website](#)

Your stories



Erin Stewart @xerinstewart

We first met Erin Stewart at the NSW Youth Week Minding Our Mental Health Forum, held at Parliament house on Tuesday 1 April. Following the event Erin wrote an [article for Ramp Up](#), the ABC's online destination for news, discussion, debate and humour for everyone in Australia's disability communities.

We caught up with Erin this week to talk about her time at the forum and her thoughts on youth mental health.

Why did you want to attend the Youth Week Forum?

Youth mental health is an issue dear to my heart - I'm 24 and have lived experience of mental illness. I've known for a while both from reports and from first-hand experience that the mental health system in Australia is deeply flawed. I wanted discuss the issues with like-minded people and to do something about it.

What did you get out of attending the Forum?

I was surprised to find a lot of hope in listening to others. So many people had their own projects in their schools and local communities. I was impressed by high school students who gave talks at their school about their experience with depression and anxiety and grassroots awareness and fundraisers. Many of the young people from regional areas were also working on the experience of social isolation. For me, it really reaffirmed the value of writing for awareness as a form of advocacy. It's absolutely crucial and it is incredibly heartening to see young people take the lead.

Are you actively involved in any mental health groups? How?

At the moment, I'm interning at the Mental Health Association NSW in the communications team. It's nice to work in an area that focuses on mental health promotion, it's very positive. Other than that, a chunk of my work as a freelance writer is in investigating various aspects of the mental health system and mental health stigma. It's actually quite healing to have parts of my story stand for something bigger. It makes me feel like even the most horrible times and the worst stigma actually have a purpose.

Tell us a bit about your lived experience of mental illness

I've experienced symptoms of bipolar, psychosis, and social anxiety for a large portion of my life. It was hard to do anything about it because I didn't really think that my experiences were that bad, and nobody picked up on the warning signs. I didn't understand that often the lived experience of various illnesses didn't always match the stereotypes. The feeling that something wasn't right always followed me though. I tried to ignore the strange states I sometimes found myself in, working through it wherever possible. It eventually became impossible to ignore when I reached crisis point. Recovery has been a long, non-linear, and frustrating process, but it's been very helpful to know that having trouble with mental health is not an inevitable part of my life.

From the Commissioner



Foundations of a new future in mental health

As the first half of 2014 comes towards a close I am pleased with the breadth of involvement coming from the community across many sectors including disability, young people, veterans, Aboriginal mental health and in the arts. All of the efforts in these areas now are helping to shape the mental health landscape in the future.

We recently farewelled the outgoing Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Kevin Humphries MP and welcomed the new minister, the Hon. Jai Rowell MP. We thank Mr Humphries for his leadership and support through the establishment and first years of the Commission and look forward to working with Mr Rowell.

In April I was invited to attend the Youth Week *Minding Our Mental Health* Forum at NSW Parliament House to hear from more than 120 young people from across NSW. The passion to support their peers impressed me, as did the areas of concern that they raised in supporting friends and how to address mental health in young people. I feel I took as much out of this day as the delegates themselves.

I would also like to congratulate our Deputy Commissioner Fay Jackson on being selected to be a representative on the National Mental Health Leaders Program in acknowledgement of her tireless work contributing to positive changes in mental health. Fay, I know you will fill this role with passion and commitment as you do in your Deputy Commissioner role and wish you well.

Finally, on the draft Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW, I would like to thank everyone that has been involved in its development from participation in workshops, community forums, contribution of submissions, advisory councils and all advice received by the Commission in relation to the Plan. At this time, I would especially like to thank all of the Commission staff who have worked tirelessly to meet and exceed my expectations and to deliver a Plan that I believe delivers a new path for mental health in NSW.

John Feneley
Commissioner

Drug and alcohol services receive recognition

Commissioner John Feneley recently presented awards to the winners of the inaugural NSW Non Government Drug and Alcohol Awards for excellence in treatment, research and health promotion. The Awards were presented as part of the [Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies](#) (NADA) Conference dinner on 12 May 2014. NADA is the peak organisation for non government organisations (NGOs) specialising in drug and alcohol services in NSW and has been providing services to individuals, families and communities for more than forty years.

The awards were established to acknowledge the significant contribution of the NGO drug and alcohol sector through leadership, program design and delivery, and dedicated workforce in communities across NSW to reduce the harms relating to drug and alcohol use.

See the [list of winners](#) on our website.

Experiences from the NSW Hunter National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Site

The Commission, in partnership with the Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) is supporting a role specifically established to review and assess the introduction of the NDIS in the NSW Hunter launch site.

Tina Smith, a Senior Policy Advisor, is based in this role at the Hunter launch site to better understand what the NDIS will mean for people living with mental illness and the organisations that support them.

You can read more about the NDIS NSW Hunter launch [here](#).

Looking forward looking back Forum

On Wednesday 2 April, Commission staff participated in the fourth *Looking Forward Looking Back* forum at Redfern Town Hall. The Forum, organised by the Inner City Working Group For Mental Health Recovery was supported by the Mental Health Council of Australia, the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, St Vincents and Mater Health Sydney and the Federal Department of Health.

Keynote speakers, panel discussions and workshops provided information on how different approaches are being used to improve a person's journey with mental health across the inner city.

Read more about the [Forum](#) on our website.

Mental Health strategy for LGBTI people

ACON recently launched [ACON Mental Health and Wellbeing Health Outcome Strategy 2013-2018](#) which includes plans to reduce negative impacts on the mental health of LGBTI people as well as increase factors which contribute to good mental wellbeing.

ACON President Mark Orr says there's a pressing need for mental health services which support the needs of LGBTI people and communities. "While many LGBTI people live happy, healthy and productive lives, there are a range of preventable mental health issues which affect a disproportionate number of people in the LGBTI community compared to the general population."

ACON is NSW's leading health promotion organisation specialising in HIV prevention and support and LGBTI health.

Commission welcomes artists at exhibition opening



On Thursday 8 May, the Commission hosted a group of artists whose works are currently on display at the Commission offices as part of the *See Me, Hear Me* exhibition series organised by the Benevolent Society. The event marked the official opening of the second exhibition of *See Me Hear Me* artworks hosted at the Commission.

The works on display have all been produced by people who live with mental illness. Participating in these exhibitions provides the artists with an opportunity to exhibit their work and for visitors to gain an insight into what it is like to live with mental illness. It can also provide the artists with confidence and ideas for their art-making or to pursue other interests.

[Read more on our website.](#)

Deputy Commissioner Keynote address at Aboriginal Forum



From left: Minister for Mental Health, The Hon. Kevin Humphries MP, Deputy Commissioner Bradley Foxlewin and Deputy Commissioner Robyn Shields

Deputy Commissioners Robyn Shields and Bradley Foxlewin joined Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Kevin Humphries MP and more than 250 Mental Health Workers from across the state at the Aboriginal Mental Health Worker's Forum, held in Coffs Harbour on 5-6 March.

Addressing the delegates Robyn spoke about the crucial role of Aboriginal mental health workers and the many firsts that she and other Aboriginal health workers have witnessed and been a part of; including the first National Aboriginal Health Strategy, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, *Bringing them Home* Report and the creation of the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Workforce.

Robyn said, "Aboriginal mental health workers play a crucial role in supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people, their families and communities.

"As we reform mental health services it is essential that we fully recognise this role and build a resilient and valued Aboriginal mental health workforce."

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You can MAKE A MATE'S DAY!

Makeamatesday.com.au developed by the NSW Mental Health Commission and NSW Youth Advisory Council, is a simple way for young people to support their peers who may be struggling with mental illness and still connect and have fun.

Check it out!



The Aboriginal Mental Health Workers Forum brought together Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Mental Health Workers from the public mental health system, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and Non Government Organisations to increase the expertise and knowledge of the emerging Aboriginal mental health workforce in New South Wales.

The forum was hosted by the Mid North Coast Local Health District (funded by the NSW Ministry of Health), in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW (AH&MRC).

The Freedom Stories



A powerful new series of short films has recently been released in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) young people, titled *The Freedom Stories*. The films were launched last week to coincide with International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT).

The Freedom Stories are five powerful short films that showcase the strength and confidence of LGBTI young people, providing support to other young people struggling with their sexuality or gender diversity.

The videos are very moving – and beautifully produced by the young filmmakers. Please have a look and share them if you feel inspired.

This is a joint project of ACON and ReachOut.Com (the Inspire Foundation). [Watch the films now](#)