



# Council Chatter

Newsletter of the WA Mental Health Advisory Council

**Inside this issue:**

From the Chair... 1

Member Profile:  
Dr Michael Wright 2

Looking out for the  
"islanders" 2



**From the Chair: the CEO/Chair's Forum...**

Co-Production was the focus of the second Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC) CEO/Chair's Forum held on June 4th. Over 120 participants including not only Chairs and CEO's of Mental Health/Drug & Alcohol agencies, but also consumers and carers, actively participated in the Forum.

Mental Health Commissioner Timothy Marney provided the Forum with an update on the WA Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Plan 2015-2025 and answered several questions about the Plan.

The following presentation on Co-Production from Lyn Mahboub, Strategic Recovery Advisor for Richmond Wellbeing, and Helena Pollard, an active systemic advocate for individuals and families living with mental health issues, set the scene for an expert panel and audience discussion that was skilfully facilitated by Curtin University Senior Lecturer and winner of the 2014 Mental Health Good Outcomes Award

winner for Individual Excellence, Dr Robyn Martin.

The discussion concluded that:

- The present time of significant change in the sector provided a great opportunity to facilitate the introduction of co-production;
- Some of the keys to the successful implementation include:

*Trust between the participants;*  
*The sharing of meaningful data;*  
*Empowering consumers and carers to enable effective participation;*  
*Ensuring shared accountability;*  
*Understanding that the process will take time.*

The third MHAC CEO/Chair's Forum will be held early in November.

**Barry MacKinnon**  
 Chair, Mental Health Advisory Council

**Council Members**

**Barry MacKinnon AM**  
Chair

**Margaret Doherty**  
**Dr John Edwards**  
**Pam Gardner**  
**Chris Gostelow**  
**Petra Liedel**  
**Janelle Ridgway**  
**Lindsay Smoker**  
**Dr Bernadette Wright**  
**Dr Michael Wright**  
**Prof. Dianne Wynaden**

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## Member Profile: Dr Michael Wright

I am a Yuat Nyoongar man, and my family are from the area known as the Victoria Plains, which includes the townships of Moora and New Norcia area. My clinical background has been as a hospital social worker and a mental health manager.

In 2010, I graduated with a PhD that investigated issues of access to services for Aboriginal families whose lives are affected by mental illness. Also in that same year, I secured a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) post-doctoral fellowship, which expanded on the work completed for my PhD. I have a proven track record in undertaking large research projects that require community

support and in working with Nyoongar (Aboriginal) peoples.

My current research project, the Looking Forward Project has 12 mainstream mental health and drug and alcohol services and 18 Nyoongar Elders as participants and stakeholders. The project involves Nyoongar Elders and service providers working closely to adapt and change policies and practices to improve mental health and drug and alcohol services to Nyoongar (Aboriginal) peoples living in the Perth area.

Being a member on the Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC) has provided me the opportunity to work with others on the important mental

health issues impacting on Aboriginal consumers, their carers and family members. I enjoy being an MHAC member as I have found the experience both supportive and affirming.



## Looking out for the "islanders" - Margaret Doherty

*"There is clear evidence that providing support to families improves the situation for the individual, particularly in the area of psychosis"*

"No man is an island", wrote the poet, John Donne. A challenge in the mental health and drug and alcohol sector is to make sure that attention is extended outwards from an individual receiving care to the families, carers and significant others who walk alongside the individual. There is clear evidence that providing support to families improves the situation for the individual, particularly in the area of psychosis. Families also have support and care needs in their own right and these are varied within a family. Imagine if you're a teenager doing exams while being the main carer for your unwell parent. You will have different support and care needs than that of a

parent of an adult. The importance of better communication with families is recognized in the new Mental Health Act 2014 where carers' rights are clearly outlined. For individuals who have become disconnected from their families-of-origin and have developed families-by-acceptance or choice, members of these families may be 'nominated persons' under the new Act. Caregiving in Aboriginal communities is often a shared experience as is also the case in many culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It is important then that service providers identify and work with families in a culturally secure way. If 'no man is an island', then we need to look out for the islanders.

### *Values of the Mental Health Advisory Council*

*Value and respect diversity and work in an inclusive and accessible way with particular sensitivity to advocating for the most unheard voices;*  
*Explore innovation in Mental Health with curiosity and seek out the best local, national and international practices; and;*  
*Promote hope for recovery for individuals with mental ill-health and their families/carers*