



ISSUES 011

Issue

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No 11

Welcome to the Issues 011 news sheet. It gives some background information about the history of the 23 Big Issues project and an update on the project since 2010 Sydney TheMHS consumer day.

We believe that this work reflects a consumer perspective especially for the people who have consistently attended the TheMHS Consumer Day since 1996. Approximately 60% of the 4826 people who have attend the day have been on more than two occasions



The definition for a consumer perspective is taken from The Kit: p 256: *A way of seeing the world in the light of experience/s of mental/emotional distress. Includes experiences of seeking support (of various kinds), of stigma in the community and within services. Also incorporates a sense of solidarity with others who have had similar experience*

1. Start of the 23 Big Issues

Although the 2000 TheMHS Adelaide Consumer Forum, is seen as the starting point for the 23 Big Issues project. It is important to acknowledge the work done in the previous consumer day committees especially the 1999 TheMHS Melbourne Consumer day organising committee: with assistance from the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC) www.vmiac.com.au, when they actually identified the first 20 Issues and started to focus the attention of people attending the consumer day on the importance of these issues.

Steven Pitcher had been nominated as the co-ordinator for the Consumer Day in Adelaide in 2000.

Steven attended his first Consumer Day in 1999 in Melbourne. It was there that he saw the work that had been developed by consumers, believed that this work was important and that action was needed. He decided that it was time to stop talking about what was wrong and encourage people to develop solutions that had some relevance and meaning for consumers.

On 28 August 2000, at the Adelaide Convention Centre, 235 people experiencing a mental illness came together and worked through the issues.

Two outcomes were (a) the addition of 3 more issues to (a) make a total of 23; and (b) the creation of a document detailing the work of the day.

During the 2000 consumer day those present work shopped the issues, Steven wrote up there findings, presented them to Mr Woolridge, Commonwealth Minister for Health and the 2000 Youth Round table forum:

The document, entitled *The Most Important Issues Affecting People with a Mental Illness or Disorder* (known to most people as the 23 Big Issues), provided background to each of the issues and proposed solutions developed by the people at the forum. This document is available on the NSW Consumer Voice web site www.nswcv.org.au. Steven passed away in 2010 aged 31 years of age. He is sadly missed by the TheMHS family and the consumer movement.

In 2001 the Australian Mental Health Consumer Network presented the Issues to the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council National Mental Health Working Group so all state & territory directors could have had the opportunity to say what they were doing about these issues.

2. Why are the 23 Big Issues important?

One of the crucial ingredients in getting a better outcome for people with mental illness is firstly making sure we understand the issues of importance for them, and secondly letting everyone know what the issues are and what should be done about them.

This means we need to collect information from the people involved: those with mental illness; those that care for them; those that provide services to them; and those that make policy about mental health.

In Australia these issues have appeared in a long list of reports, including the 1992 'Burdekin' Report, 1994 National Community Advisory Group Report; "Let's talk about Action" and the 2005 Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) (in association with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) "Not for Service" Report, all express the failure in the mental health system and the need for change for services in Australia.

In New Zealand at a meeting held during 2011 of the Auckland Regional Consumer Network the participants suggested the following three reports be considered to show that these issues still need to be addressed in NZ. The reports are; The 1996 Mason report, Te Kokiri: The Mental Health and Addiction Plan 2006-2015; and Our Lives in 2014: A recovery vision from people with experience of mental illness.

As requested by participants from the meeting at the Auckland Regional Consumer Network we have circulated this information to the full BINZ membership of 184 for further discussion. BINZ is for New Zealand 'People who', Tangata whai ora, Consumers/users/survivors of psychiatric services - (whichever description you choose!). 'BINZ' can mean 'Beyond Insanity New Zealand', 'Brilliant Individuals New Zealand', 'Bedlam irrepressible New Zealand' - whichever you prefer.

This is a national NZ forum for consumer to share news, views, resources, and to network.
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/binz/>

3. The future of the 23 Big Issues project

Following the 2010 Sydney TheMHS consumer day a 23 Big Issues working group was started by the organising committee and the group has meet monthly to consider the feedback from the many people who attended the 2010 consumer day. The background section on the 23 Big Issues and first four issues templates are being made available for distribution and further feedback from xx October 2011 on the TheMHS website www.themhs.org.

As feedback from each of the 23 Big Issues are completed and signed off by the TheMHS management committee they will be uploaded to the TheMHS website www.themhs.org for wider comments and ongoing discussion. The working group is planning to have a final report ready for the 2013 Melbourne TheMHS Conference.

If you have others in your networks that have an interest in the 23 Big Issues please forward this email to them.

This link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/23BigIssuesFeedback> will collect your comments on the new background section and the templates as they go online. Any comments will be considered for inclusion in the 23 Big Issues final report.



More Information: A document entitled The Most Important Issues Affecting People with a Mental Illness or Disorder (known to most people as the 23 Big Issues) has more information about the issues with some proposed solutions. The document can be found at <http://www.nswcv.org.au>

List of the Issues

	Issue Title	Description
1	Transport	Transporting people with a mental illness to hospital by police.
2	Seclusion	People experiencing a mental illness being strip-searched and put in seclusion rooms when detained in psychiatric facilities
3	Side Effects	Mental health consumers having little or no choice of prescribed medication and the side-effects that result
4	Accommodation	Lack of choice, safety and support regarding accommodation for people with a mental illness
5	Employment	Lack of employment opportunities for those experiencing a mental illness
6	Access When Unwell	People with a mental illness having to be really unwell to access help
7	Continuity of Care	Continuity of care in the community and hospitals for people with a mental illness
8	Choice of Therapist	Lack of choice in type of therapist i.e. Alternative, Psychologist, OT, Peer Worker
9	Rehabilitation	Lack of worthwhile and appropriate rehabilitation.
10	ECT	Unfair and inappropriate Detention, Treatment and Administrative Orders to force treatment such as Electro-Convulsive Treatment (ECT).
11	Unpaid Work	Amount of unpaid work done by people with a mental illness
12	Stigma	Stigma from the family, community, workplace, police force, mental health service providers
13	Lack of Information	Lack of information given to consumers about their illness and legal rights
14	Lack of Legislation	Lack of legislation protecting mental health consumers
15	Lack of Partnership	Lack of true partnership in service delivery and tokenistic representation.
16	Lack of Empowerment	Lack of empowerment for mental health consumers
17	Rural and Remote	Lack of mental health services in rural and remote areas.
18	Management Plans	Little or no involvement in management plans
19	Support from Hospital	Little support from hospital to home for people with a mental illness
20	Access to Psychiatrists	Lack of suitable access to psychiatrists
21	Children of parents with MI	Children of parents with a mental illness
22	Young People	Unique problems facing young people with a mental illness
23	C.A.L.D.	Culturally and Linguistically diverse people experiencing a mental illness

4. History of the TheMHS Consumer Day

The TheMHS Conference held their first Consumer Day in 1994 and it has been held each year since then. The conference is held in a different city each year and a group of consumers from that city assist with organising a consumer day and by reporting to the local conference program organising committee. The table below gives a list of the years, locations, convenors and numbers that have attended each of the consumer days. The TheMHS management committee can put you in contact with previous consumer day organisers.

Year	Location	Convenor	Numbers
1994	Melbourne	Rod Salvage	200
1995	Auckland	Mary O'Hagan	250
1996	Brisbane	Melanie Scott	300
1997	Sydney	Douglas Holmes	353
1998	Hobart	Noni Campbell	300
1999	Melbourne	Isabelle Collins	250
2000	Adelaide	Steven Pitcher	235
2001	Wellington	Stewart Fenton	300
2002	Sydney	Jodie Brown	300
2003	Canberra	Lynette Bone	320
2004	Gold Coast	Rick Austin	270
2005	Adelaide	Gerald Greaves	280
2006	Townsville	Rod Salvage	193
2007	Melbourne	Michael Flemming	419
2008	Auckland	Deb Christian & Shona Clark	200
2009	Perth	Lyn Marboub	200
2010	Sydney	Lynda Hennessy & Paula Hanlon	253
2011	Adelaide	Paula Decan	203
2012	Cairns	Ross O'Donovan	?
2013	Melbourne	To be advised	?
2014	?	To be advised	?

5. What happens at a TheMHS Consumer Day?

Each Consumer day is organised by a local group of consumers, the person/s that have coordinated the day in the past is in the table on page 1. Although there are no must do's with a consumer day: history now shows that about 40% of the people who attend are there for the first time the balance have usually attended more than one other consumer day.

There are couple of unwritten rules that came from the 1996 TheMHS Consumer day; this is a consumer only space that is organised by consumers for consumers, the other is that the day needs to happen at the same location as the main conference to accommodate the support we received from the TheMHS office in running the day.

Both these unwritten rules have positive and negatives effects that we could and usually do debate with each new committee that the Sydney TheMHS Committee works with. The benefits far out weight the negatives as the evaluations and feedback show each year. The committee has received some financial support from the Commonwealth Government to put on the day, however since 2001 there has been a reduced admission fee for consumers to attend the day. Organising committees are not obliged to include any activities that a majority of local members do not want to showcase on the day.