



**consumers reforming health**  
The next wave in community engagement in health care  
Melbourne Exhibition & Convention Centre



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CENTRE

**PATHWAYS THROUGH PARTICIPATION:**  
**BUILDING DYNAMIC**  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES WITH CONSUMERS

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## A WRHC Quality Improvement Project

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# Who we are

Western Region Health Centre is a Primary Care Health Service based in Melbourne's Western Suburbs

We run a wide range of community-based mental health programs in the areas of Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Hobson's Bay, Wyndham and Hume

We provide Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation Support Services to diverse communities with many special and complex needs.

Some of the services that we supply include:  
a Prevention & Recovery Centre,  
Day Programs,  
Vietnamese and African Mental Health Programs,  
Youth Residential Service,  
Aged Persons Programs,  
Outreach Services, Personal Helpers and Mentor Services  
and Day to Day Living Programs



# Background to the Pathways Project

Client Participation Steering Committee established in 2000

In 2005 a Consumer Consultant position is created at 0.2 EFT

Over the next 5 years the number and type of Mental Health programs operated by the Health Centre grows rapidly

In 2009 the Client Participation Steering Committee recommends a review of Consumer Participation practice, an internal Quality Improvement grant application proves successful

Late in 2009 the Consumer Led Research Project begins with the establishment of a project reference group

In June 2010 the Pathways Project Report is finalised

**PATHWAYS THROUGH PARTICIPATION:**  
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A Consumer Led Research Project informed by a consumer perspective that asks

What does our organisation need to know, do and believe in order

to embed consumer participation within everyday work practice?

What supports and enables the involvement of consumers?

Our aim, to develop a guiding framework for sustainable

and meaningful participation across our mental health programs



# Consumer Participation – Why?

Better and more effective services

Shifts the balance of power, responsibility and resources from professionals more to individuals

Viewing clients as potential assets, rather than passive recipients of services – new relationships

Active involvement and sense of control over health care leads to better outcomes

Consumerism , Activism, Citizenship

# The Pathways Project

A Consumer Led Research project

Surveyed staff of MH programs via an electronic questionnaire that considered the attitudes, knowledge and skills of staff members in the area of consumer participation

Conducted focus groups with the major stakeholders staff, consumer advisory group, consumers, consumer workers and management

Reported findings included action plan that detailed guidelines and practices for implementation & change within our organisation



# Recognition of the Importance of Consumer Participation

Reflected within the social policy of health services;  
a prominent feature of our three National Mental Health plans,  
the Mental Health Statement of Rights and Responsibilities and  
2010's revised National Standards for Mental Health Services



# What we found

Disparity across regions and sites with regards to current consumer participation practices

Wide support and popular belief that consumer participation improves mental health services

Universal agreement that such processes need to be properly supported and resourced and be made available to all clients

Considerable scope to develop tasks and duties for consumer consultants within various service settings

A variety of approaches need to be employed in order to engage consumers across all walks of life



# Access and Support: Key recommendations

Access for all clients to consumer consultants

More collaboration between services & clients through committees, groups and special projects

A connection with structures of management, control and decision making

Opportunities to participate in staff training & recruitment

Career pathways, skill development, training, material and financial resources

Support for consumers so that they can contribute what they want to, how they want to

Clarity and understanding around modes of participation



# Pathways Report recommendations

## Phase 1 Improve Capacity

Increase in the number and EFT of Consumer Consultants

Create a Senior Consultant role to provide leadership, mentoring and supervision

Expansion of the consumer consultant role

Audit Human Resource processes to determine if they meet needs of a consumer workforce

Pathways for participation for consumers, interview panels, orientation, consumer committees etc.

Opportunities for learning and skill development i.e. work force, consumer led training, committee representation, volunteer opportunities

# Pathways Report recommendations

## Phase 2 Program Culture

Consumer Participation is appropriately reflected in policy, budget and program planning for the Mental Health programs in an ongoing capacity

Clear and expressed management support for Consumer Participation

Consumer led training for staff to further skill development and imbed a positive culture for Consumer Participation

Mental Health programs to continue a focus on consumer driven activities

Consumer participation as a 'compulsory' requirement in staff Individual Development Reviews and to be reflected in position descriptions

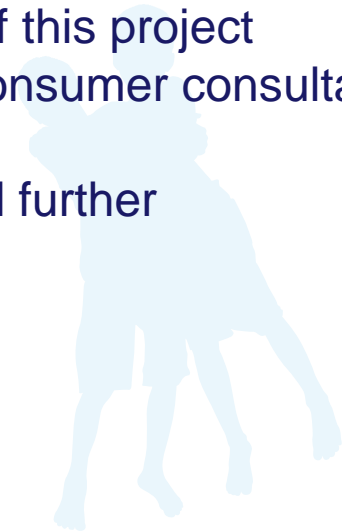
# Pathways Report recommendations

## Phase 3: Improving Advocacy, Communication and Feedback

Establish communication pathways with the organisation-wide consumer advisory group and board of management as well as regional consumer advisory groups

Provide feedback to consumers regarding the outcomes of this project (written report, poster display and informal feedback via consumer consultant)

Share outcomes of this project with other MH services and further develop partnerships in the areas of: consumer networks, training and organisational frameworks



# Impact of the Pathways Project

Empowerment and understanding through Community Development

A catalyst for Change/Reform within our organisation

Ratification from our Board of Management

Commitment from the top down to a vision that will take us forward

Consultation with all parties and deep dialogue at each point of change is our change management practice

Understanding, clarity, information and stakeholder input become our

‘Nothing about us without us’

‘As above, so below. As within so without’



**THANKYOU.**

**PREPARED BY Neil Turton-Lane**  
For Western Region Health Centre

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