



# THE AUTHORISED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

## Newsletter

September 2002

Jigsaw, the Newsletter for all Authorised Mental Health Practitioners

### REVIEW OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ACT

The Review of the Mental Health Act 1996 (the 'Act') has commenced and the AMHP representatives on the Stakeholder Group are David Bruce, AMHP from PET and Angie Woodacre AMHP from Central Wheatbelt. Although David and Angie are our representatives the ideas for change to the legislation need to come from **YOU**.

We will compile a submission on behalf of AMHPs and we need **YOU** to send us what **YOU** would like changed in the Act. It can be broader than AMHP issues, so if you have comments about CTOs or involuntary status, patient rights or any section in the Act you can contribute.

Send your submission in writing to either David at [david.bruce@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:david.bruce@health.wa.gov.au) or Angie at [angela.woodacre@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:angela.woodacre@health.wa.gov.au) or myself at [tim.rolfe@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:tim.rolfe@health.wa.gov.au)

The stakeholder group has commenced meeting so the sooner you can get your ideas to one of us the better. But if it takes longer we will still try and include it in our submission. Alternatively you can make submissions on your own behalf. The Executive Officer has issued a proforma, which can be obtained by e-mailing Sylvia Meier on [ReviewofMHA@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ReviewofMHA@health.wa.gov.au)

---

### Review of Skills Program

The next Review of Skills program for mental health practitioners who want to be authorised is on 26, 27 and 28 November 2002. Interested practitioners should discuss nominations with their Manager before contacting me. For further information contact me on 9222 4217

### AUTHORISED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER FORUMS

As part of on-going education for AMHPs the AMHP Steering Group made up of representatives from all the areas and all the disciplines has decided to run three AMHP Forums.

These 2-hour Forums will consist of short presentations and the opportunity to ask representatives from the Police Service, the Legal and Legislative section of the Department of Health, the Law Centre and the Chief Psychiatrist any questions regarding the AMHP role or issues to do with the Mental Health Act 1996.

There will be two Forums for metropolitan AMHPs and one for rural and remote AMHPs to be conducted by teleconferencing. The dates, times and venues are as follows-

**Forum 1-** Thursday 24 October, 10.00AM to 12.00 noon at Seminar Room 4, Department of Health, 189 Royal Street, East Perth.

**Forum 2-** Thursday 31 October, 10.00AM to 12.00 noon at Lecture Theatre 1, CC Bennett Building, T Block, Fremantle Hospital.

**Forum 3-** Friday 8 November 2002, 10AM to 12.00 noon from Teleconference Centre, West Perth (for rural and remote staff only)

If you have any questions for any of the representatives I would be grateful to receive them beforehand. It will provide an opportunity for the representatives to give a considered answer.

Please put the date you are going to attend in your diary and if you have any queries about the Forums please contact me.

## Its Not What You Do It's the Way that You Do It

### Community Treatment Orders- A Practitioner's Guide

The introduction of Community Treatment Orders (CTOs) into Mental Health legislation in WA raised a number of concerns. From one perspective CTOs are seen as the logical alternative to inpatient incarceration as it maintains people with a mental illness in the community where before due to lack of insight, non-compliance with medication and relapse they were routinely readmitted to hospital. An alternative view and one expressed very strongly by consumer groups is that CTOs represent a human rights violation. People with a mental illness who are well enough to live in the community do not require such close and intimidating supervision. It interferes with people's right to choose their treatment, damages therapeutic relationships and diverts scarce community resources into legal rather than therapeutic services.

Research into the use of CTOs has a number of methodological problems and leaves the results uncertain. What is clearer is that if CTOs are targeted to those patients who would most benefit and managed therapeutically then the outcomes may be better.

With this in mind the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist has developed A Practitioner's Guide to the use of CTOs. The Guide looks at best practice as well as interpreting legislative requirements. The Guide will be published shortly as an A5 size handbook and will also be available on the Mental Health Webpage.

### Six Monthly Notifications

Thank you to those who have sent theirs in. If you have not as yet please send them in ASAP even if you have not done any assessments or referred anybody. For further info contact Doris on 92224462

---

### AMHPs and the Senior Nurse Work Value Agreement.

A few AMHPs have indicated their dissatisfaction with this agreement and as a protest have decided to resign their AMHP status.

Although I understand that there is discontent with this agreement this is primarily a human resource issue and the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist has had no in-put into any of these HR matters.

I recognise that the AMHP role is one voluntarily accepted by mental health nurses who are free to resign if they wish, however I would ask them to note that the AMHP role and the Work Value Agreement are separate issues and should not impact on each other.

I also recognise that this may change given the submissions to the appeals system of the agreement but until that is completed I would ask AMHPs not to act hastily in protesting these matters.

---

### Trivia

A newspaper asked readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding or changing one letter and supply a new definition. Here are some winners-

**Intoxication**- Euphoria at getting a tax rebate, which lasts until you realise it was your money to start with.

**Giraffiti**- Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.

**Inoculate**- To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.

**Osteoporosis**- A degenerate disease

**Glibido**- All talk and no action

**Sarcasm**- The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit with and the person who doesn't get it.