



VMIAC
by and for consumers

VMIAC ANNUAL REPORT
2015-2016

VICTORIAN MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS COUNCIL • 03 9380 3900 • 1/22
AINTREE STREET, BRUNSWICK EAST, VICTORIA • WWW.VMIAC.ORG.AU

ABOUT VMIAC



VMIAC is the peak Victorian non-government organisation for people with direct lived experience of mental health issues or emotional distress.

VMIAC's membership comprises individuals and groups of people with direct lived experience. Associate members (non-consumers) may also belong to the organisation if they support the aims of VMIAC.

VMIAC engages in a number of activities including:

- Information provision
- Support
- Consumer perspective education and training
- Individual, group and systemic advocacy
- Research

VMIAC receives recurrent funding from both the Commonwealth and State governments. The State Department of Health provides the bulk of our funding to enable us to undertake most of our work. The Commonwealth Department of Social Services provides funding to deliver an advocacy service to people who live in rural and regional Victoria.

OUR VISION

A world where all mental health consumers stand proud, live a life with choices honoured, rights upheld and these principles embedded in all aspects of society.

VMIAC aims to achieve by:

1. Honouring mental health consumer diversity
2. Providing advocacy for mental health consumers
3. Advancing mental health consumer workforce and leadership
4. Delivering information and training to the community
5. Enabling mental health consumer driven education and research
6. Developing strategic partnerships

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

VMIAC's work is premised on the following beliefs:

- People's experiences are respected and valued
- People are experts in their own lives
- People have a right to self determination
- People have capacity to make genuine choices, free from coercion
- People should be safe, respected, valued and informed
- People's diversity is embraced

A few statistics...

Data collated for our funding bodies identified that VMIAC provides the following:

Telephone Advocacy

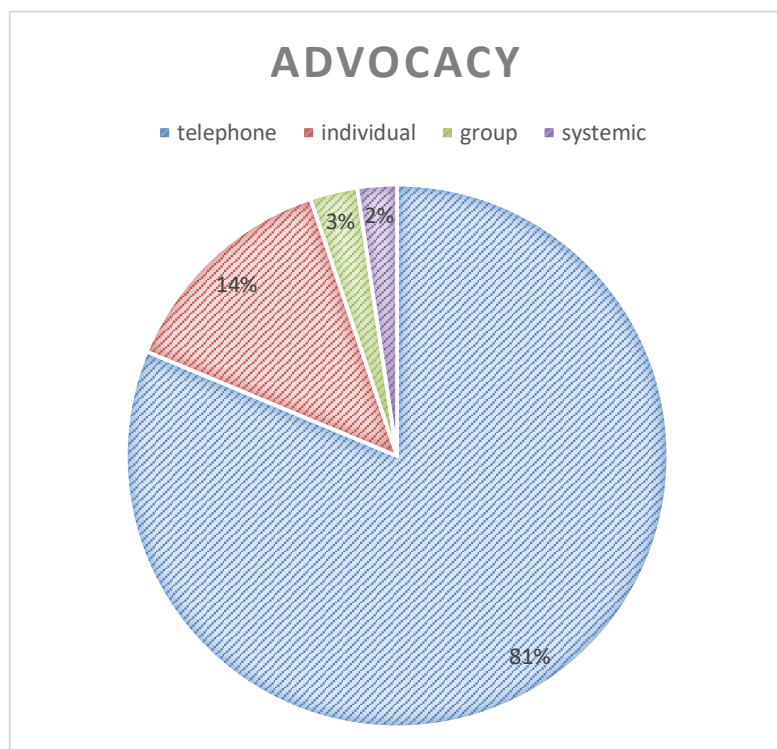
(including information sharing and individual support) – **1500 people**

Individual Advocacy – 576 people

- Metro: 180
- Rural: 129
- Unspecified: 127

Group Advocacy – 79 groups

The VMIAC team have also been working on a number of systemic projects across the state.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- The Consumer Workforce conference
- Collaborative work with Melbourne University through the Melbourne Social Equity Institute
- Collaborative work with Melbourne University on the Mental Illness research funded project – CORE
- Supported 5 consumers to attend Themhs in New Zealand
- The Committee of Management completed a strategic planning process and produced a new vision and guiding principles
- Hosted a series of Intentional Peer Support Training Sessions
- Hosted a series of Consumer workforce days
- Co-chaired the consumer dialogue days
- Active participation on the Mental Health 10 year plan Taskforce
- Active participation on the following 10 year Mental Health plan reference groups
 - Lived Experience reference group (Co-Chair)
 - Workforce reference group
 - Innovation reference group
- Active participation on the NDIS taskforce
- VMIAC roadshows to rural Victoria
- Key note speech to MIND conference
- Re branding of VMIAC
- Key note speech to Mental Health Tribunal Conference
- NDIS Musical launch
- Inaugural Consumer Awards Night
- Relaunching VMIAC Website



COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

Members of the Committee of Management for the 2015-2016 year were:

- Chairperson Vrinda Edan
- Deputy Chairperson Neil Turton Lane
- Secretary Liz Carr
- Treasurer James Horton

Ordinary members

- Erandathie Jayakody
- Sherie Stifler
- Ali Pain
- Wanda Bennett
- Sharon Saunders
- Gayle Grassick

As well as the Committee of Management meetings, Committee members and general members have also sat on sub committees that form part of the VMIAC Governance structure

- Finance Audit and Risk Management sub committee
- Human Rights and Ethics committee
- Governance sub committee

VMIAC TEAM

The VMIAC TEAM have undergone a number of changes. In the last year we have said goodbye to:

Elena Lopez
Daniel Van der Pluym

We have welcomed to our team:

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Maggie Toko | CEO |
| Frankie Freeman | Advocate |
| David Barclay | NDIS – Education |
| Simone Allen | NDIS – Advocate |
| Nathan Gixti | NDIS – research |
| Ella Kingsley | CORE |
| Deb Carlon | External Relations Officer |
| Liz Leveridge | Admin/Reception |
| Jey Jeyakumaran | Finance |

Continuing their work within the team:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Tony Salter | Senior Advocate |
| Bill Moon | Information and Telephone Advocate |
| Dominic Troughton | Information and Telephone Advocate |
| Craig Wallace | NDIS Senior |
| Susan B | Advocate |



Word from the Chair - VRINDA EDAN



I am very pleased to present VMIAC's annual report for 2015-16. Over the past 12 months VMIAC has undergone significant changes. The Committee of Management is delighted that Maggie Toko joined the staff as Chief Executive Officer and you will see from her report the significant improvements that have been achieved since her appointment.

The last 12 months have seen VMIAC undertake a range of strategic planning activities both at a governance and operational levels. We are very pleased with our new strategy and believe that the vision and principals will guide our work well into the future. To accompany this new strategy, Maggie and the team have also developed a new logo, branding and soon to be launched a new website that will enable consumers across the state to participate with VMIAC in a range of new and exciting ways.

I would like to particularly bring to your notice 3 events that the team at VMIAC undertook this last year. Firstly, the Consumer Workforce conference in March was a huge success with 171 Registrations and 41 Presentations over the 2 days. We were very pleased that the Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Mental Health opened the conference and took time out of his busy schedule to answer questions from conference attendees. The feedback from attendees was excellent and underlines how important this conference is to consumer workers in Victoria. Second, the 6 Scholarship awardees for the TheMHS conference in New Zealand had a wonderful time and one of these people has now joined the staff.

Finally, during Mental Health Week, VMIAC was extraordinarily proud to present the Inaugural Consumer Worker Awards.

While celebrating these important achievements, we know that there is still much work to do. Consumers in Victoria are facing a number of challenges in the coming years. The ongoing concerns about the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and in particular the impact on people who utilise Community Managed Mental Health Services, have the staff team working hard and has also led to several new staff members being employed to ensure that we have the ability to respond to these concerns.

VMIAC also faces some concerns regarding our funding streams. While the work of VMIAC has increased, we have been able to realise very little increase in recurrent funding. Maggie and the Committee of Management are working hard with our funding bodies to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the organisation. One step we took this year towards this, was to bring our constitution into line with current law and to increase the term of office of the committee of management to 2 years. Both of these actions will stabilise the governance of the organisation and ensure consistency in operational goals into the future.

VMIAC has received strong messages from many sectors of the importance of our place in the sector and with a strong staff team, a great strategic plan and an involved membership, we look forward to increasing our partnerships and involvement over the coming year.



TReASURER's REPORT - JAMES HORTON



The 2015/16 financial year has been a challenging one for VMIAC, which for the most part reflects the costs associated with protected and difficult organisational change. As a consequence, the organisation has recorded a significant deficit.

The main factors underlying the deficit are as follows:

- extraordinary costs associated with leadership and staff changes
- staff back-pay costs associated with a review and reassessment of job grades
- higher finance and administration costs associated with a modernisation of accounting and financial reporting systems
- on-going federal government underfunding of the Group Advocacy program

With the exception of Group Advocacy program funding, all the costs are one-off and will not materially impact the 2016/17 financial year. With respect to the Group Advocacy program, a shift to program-based financial reporting over the 2015/16 financial year has highlighted substantial underfunding and cross-program subsidisation. It is expected that this will be addressed in the 2016/17 financial year.

VMIAC's sound cash reserves have afforded the organisation the ability to absorb the deficit without impact to its viability. While it will be important to renew this over the coming years, VMIAC now has right financial systems and processes to support its strategic plan.

CEO REPORT - MaGGIE TOKO



It is with great pleasure that I write my first Annual General CEO Report. I was very fortunate to join the VMIAC team in late April 2016 as the interim CEO, a position I accepted for 6 months. Since that time I have secured the substantive position and I look forward to working with the VMIAC team to ensure that VMIAC members and the broader mental health community are represented with a strong voice. I believe it is important to cast a wide lens across the community sector at this time of reform and change. It is important that VMIAC put its best foot forward in ensuring that we are at each table as reform negotiations are shaped.

Since joining the VMIAC team in **April**, we have been super busy completing a long list of obligations. The first task we completed was in **May** and involved the Accreditation process – passing with flying colours and receiving some very lovely comments from rural consumers. **May** also saw us consolidate our Human Resource portfolio by formalising all administrative tasks which included the introduction of new position descriptions. I also gave a key note address to the MIND consumer carer conference at the MCG.



In **June** the Committee of Management continued the strategic planning process, working across a weekend to frame VMIAC's guiding principles. **June** also saw us begin the rebranding, website development with consultations happening with the Committee, Team and consumers. We also began hosting the Intentional Peer Support training. **June** also saw the introduction of the VMIAC Themhs Scholarship which will become a regular event. Expressions of interest were asked for to attend the Themhs Conference in New Zealand and VMIAC selected 6 participants based on a list of criteria. One participant had to pull out of the scholarship – so accepted 5 places to attend. **July** brought the spring clean of VMIAC whereupon it was all hands on deck to rearrange offices, tidy up the warehouse and clean out unwanted material. We also completed a consolidation of data regarding collation of members names and addresses and email contacts onto one list – we then did a mail out giving notice of the intention to hold a Special Meeting with members in **August**. The Special meeting was well received and as a result the members voted to adopt the Model Rules and extend the committee term to two years. I believe this is a good move because it provides for stability in the governance of the organisation and the ability for new committee members to be orientated into their role. The committee of management met again across two weekends to finalise the strategic plan and the sense of achievement highlighted a very progressive leadership group.

August began with the VMIAC Team organising the Inaugural Mental Health Consumer Awards to be held in Mental Health Week in October in recognition of the 20 year anniversary of the Consumer workforce. The Themhs participants joined Vrinda, Tony, Bill and myself in NZ. They truly are a fabulous group, they ranged in age from 26 to 70, they attended as many workshops as they could and continue to be a driving force of opinions for VMIAC going forward. **September** saw the VMIAC Team dedicate themselves to the planning of the awards night. During this time I took two weeks annual leave and the VMIAC team with James Horton as interim CEO completed all the allocated

tasks which meant that I could walk back in and find most award night schedules completed. **October** was an exciting month, we launched the NDIS musical and as one audience member stated “VMIAC has its own ‘GLEE’ club”, it was a raging success. The very next night we celebrated the Mental Health Consumer Awards night at the Northcote Town Hall whereupon VMIAC was able to honour the hard work and effort of our peers. **November** will see VMIAC host more IPS training, celebrate our Annual General Meeting and welcome our new committee members to VMIAC. I will also be delivering a key note address to the Mental Health Tribunal Consumer Carer Conference.

Interspersed within those month long agenda’s VMIAC team members actively participated on a variety of working groups, including the 10 year Mental Health Taskforce, the Lived Experience Reference Group, the Workforce Reference Group, the Innovation Reference Group and the NDIS Taskforce. The VMIAC team were also members of the Chief Psychiatrist Inpatient Death Review 2011-2014.

VMIAC team members also participated in a series of Metro and Rural departmental dialogues for consumers and carers throughout the year. It was during this time that VMIAC launched its ‘RURAL ROADSHOW’ which involved holding breakfasts or dinners in rural locations in a show of support for consumer workers. It is VMIAC’s vision to continue this into 2017 with a concentration of both advocates and NDIS team members to visit regional areas. As an addendum VMIAC will be partnering with SHARC (Self Help Addiction Resource Centre) in the regional roadshows whereupon SHARC will provide information sessions on dual diagnosis.

VMIAC has recommitted our energies to MH ECHO-CORE (a partnership with Melbourne University and Tandem) and has a dedicated team member who is enjoying consolidating our role. VMIAC has seen the NDIS team grow following the securing of Transitional Support Package (TSP) funding.

VMIAC’s finances have taken some buffering from June 2015 – July 2016 and we are therefore recording a deficit. As James Horton has stated in the Treasurers report we have a number of ‘one off’ expenses that could not be helped.

VMIAC’s vision moving forward will include a commitment to supporting staff to achieve their full potential and thereby ensure that our team is safe and secure. In the new year VMIAC will aim to strengthen ties with the GLBTIQ community by initiating a regular queer space, we will also work towards achieving the RAINBOW TICK within the workplace and we will also have a stall at Midsummer. VMIAC will also aim to strengthen ties with the CALD community as well as committing to further develop our linkages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

VMIAC will lastly go into December with an intention to celebrate happy holidays with our members.

THEMHS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



VMIAC introduced the annual THEMHS Scholarship in June 2016. The aim is to provide an opportunity for a breadth of consumers to apply to attend the conference. Applications were sort from participants who identified with one or more of the following categories:

- GLBTIQ
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Youth
- Consumer Workers
- Those who had not previously attended

VMIAC awarded 6 scholarships. The following recipients commented on their experiences.

Neal -

"I am grateful for the experience of attending the Themhs conference this year as a representative of VMIAC. I appreciated the warm welcome from the all staff involved and from the people of New Zealand in particular. I felt New Zealand to be further advanced in many areas including indigenous recognition, GLBTIQ and working with families. Attending the consumer day I was impressed by seeing such a large workforce advocating for change from a lived experience viewpoint. Spending time with VMIAC staff and other consumer workers has allowed me to feel more comfortable with my own lived experience resulting in more mindful work practices. I would like to extend my thanks to all staff involved in my participation at Themhs this year as it was truly a special week where I was able to connect to other like-minded professionals within the field."

Toni -

"The conference experience was great, well organised with a huge program. For me the most informative and interesting parts were the 3 key note presentations. It's a pity Australia seems to be going in a different direction the "whole person including family and all workers" practice reported in Philadelphia and secondly to the compassion first practice adopted in a whole city in Texas and other places. Finally, the novel multi-media non binary overview which was new information for many of the thousand delegates. I also picked up some interesting bits about NDIS. The networking was great as was the accommodation especially being in the same venue as the conference."

Simone -

To receive such an opportunity was surreal. I'd never been to New Zealand or the Themhs conference before. The country was beautiful and welcoming just as the VMIAC team and other scholarship recipients with whom I travelled. As diverse as we all were we all came together as one with a passion for mental health and the conference did not disappoint with life-long relationships made. The daily keynote speakers were both inspiring and educational with a psychologist from Philadelphia talking about supporting vulnerable people before they experience mental illness as early as childhood by listening to them before they endure years of suffering. Recognising the person before they become unwell really stayed with me. Could it be that easy? If someone had given me the time when I so desperately needed to be listened to could things have been different? Another memorising speaker was a young girl by the name of Gloria who spoke of her lived experience and recovery and her ambition to become a psychiatric nurse. I was in complete admiration to her bravery, honesty and endeavours she is aiming to achieve. She will make a great psych nurse.

As for the conference overall, it was empowering to be with so many like-minded people, with an overwhelming choice of sessions and you wanted to be in three places at one time, the catering was plentiful and the venue and accommodation luxurious. What more could you want from a scholarship! I am forever grateful for the scholarship, I have met the most amazing people through this opportunity that has opened many doors for me and has inspired me to continue my journey to study and work in mental health to make a difference.

Many thanks to my new family at VMIAC, especially to Maggie Toko for inviting us into her family's home in New Zealand and for her endearing support. You are one in a million!



ADVOCACY - TONY SALTER



The Advocacy team comprising of Susan Borg, Simon Katterl, Telephone/information advocates Bill Moon and Dominic Troughton have had a very busy year, consolidating changes brought about by the commencement of the Independent Mental Health Advocacy Service (IMHA) and continuing to learn more about the impact of the NDIS.

During this period, we farewelled Simon Katterl who resigned to take up a position with IMHA and welcomed Frankie Freeman to the team.

Throughout the period 2015-16 advocates assisted people residing in acute in-patient units, Secure Extended Care Units (SECU) Prevention and Recovery Centres (PARC's) and Community Care Units (CCU's) as well as peer support groups in rural and regional areas. Our telephone advocates assisted people with education, information, advocacy and support. Telephone/Information advocates also conducted Consumer Workforce Education and Mutual Support Days (CWEMS). Advocates continue to participate in numerous community forums and groups ensuring that the consumer voice remain strong and have participated in reference groups, advisory committees including Tandem, Vicserv, IMHA, MHCC (Mental Health Complaints Commissioner) and have actively participated in the Consumer Workforce Conference.

All advocates work in a tireless fashion to assist and support consumers from across the state. It is a very demanding and emotional role that calls on advocates to be highly professional whilst being compassionate, caring and consistent. They are often working in extremely emotional and distressing circumstances, but never give up the fight for what is right. I wish to thank our unique and dedicated team, Susan, Bill, Dominic and Frankie for their commitment and passion, not only to VMIAC but also to the Greater Consumer Community.



NDIS DSO PROJECT UPDATE - CRAIG WALLACE



The NDIS DSO (National Disability Insurance Scheme, Disability Support Organisation) Project has enjoyed a busy, productive and collaborative year. The project involves VMIAC supporting 20 mental health peer support groups state-wide in the preparation for the state-wide rollout of the NDIS. Groups receive information about the NDIS and in turn provide VMIAC with feedback about the scheme, and are also able to apply for up to \$5000 to support the activities of their group in line with NDIS objectives.

The project officer Craig Wallace commenced in July 2015 and expressions of interest were sought from groups who wished to participate in the project. More than 20 EOIs were received and the selection of groups was made by a reference group using a process scoring the groups against the advertised criteria and with consideration of the diversity sought in the project.

The 20 groups selected were geographically diverse (11 metro, 2 metro fringe and 7 regional), and also provided support for various groups, including people from CALD backgrounds, people from ATSI backgrounds, and people identifying as gender and/or sexuality diverse. Of the 20 groups, 17 were existing groups and 3 were new groups.

The reference group was expanded to include up to two representatives from each group and met 6 weekly at VMIAC including some participating by telephone. Up to 12 groups have been represented at these meetings. All 20 groups have had their funding applications approved by the NDIA. Many from the reference group have participated in some or all of three key activities, (1) joint presentation at VMIAC's Consumer Workforce Conference in March 2016, (2) Focus group assisting the NDIA determine how mental health peer support groups should be funded in the NDIS, and (3) a webinar viewed nationwide explaining some of the ways in which peer support works in mental health.

This project involves many conversations in group settings about the NDIS. Groups vary in their knowledge of the NDIS and appreciate the role that VMIAC has taken in this project to better position their group and its participants for the NDIS rollout. As a consequence of the project VMIAC has been involved in more high level discussions about the NDIS and greater networking in the disability sector. The project is supported by the Centre of Excellence in Peer Support (CEPS) in an advisory role.

INTENTIONAL PEER SUPPORT - DEB CARLON



2016 saw VMIAC forge a relationship with Intentional Peer Support America. IPS provides a powerful framework for creating relationships where both people learn and grow together. IPS is used across the world in community, peer support, and human services settings, and is a tool for community development with broad appeal to people from all walks of life. VMIC in partnership with IPS America and the Department of Health and Human Services Mental Health and Drugs Workforce are working together to source and develop resources to support the consumer workforce with a particular focus on the newly established Post Discharge Peer Support Program. In 2016 VMIAC has hosted 5 Intentional Peer Support core trainings as well as an IPS train the trainer. Three graduates have gone on to apprentice as IPS trainers. The VMIAC Committee of Management is committed to VMIAC's workers undertaking the 5-day core training.



Inaugural VMIAC Consumer awards



The inaugural VMIAC consumer awards consisted of 6 Awards for Consumers who have made a significant contribution to consumer work, either paid or voluntary, that raises the voice of consumers and contributes to improvement of consumers experiences in Victoria.

1. Life time achievement award was won by Cath Roper
2. There were 2 Human Rights awards and these were shared by Merinda Epstein and Liz Carr
3. Diversity award was won by Evan Bichara
4. Consumer worker of the year (Clinical sector) was won by Krystyn Smale
5. Consumer worker of the year (Community sector) was won by Rick Corney
6. Consumer Advisory Group was won by co health

The awards were held at the Northcote town hall on the last night of Mental Health Week in October.



