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July 2012

A flyer for our Annual General Meeting is enclosed and as discussed in the last newsletter, as well as the usual formalities, we will be voting on whether to change the name of our group to "Inner South Families and Friends". We need members to arrive promptly at 7pm so that we can welcome our guest speaker, Barbara Hocking, at 7.30pm. Visitor parking is available on site not far from the AMREP centre (see map attached).

Our winter dinner, held this year at the Prahran Mission, was a great success and we were able to make a small donation to the Mission from the proceeds.

Diary Dates

- 14 August AGM at the AMREP Centre
Speaker: Barbara Hocking OAM
- 11 September *GP management of care -
can family liaison still happen?*
- 9 October *Research Update*
- 21 October *Film Afternoon*
- 13 November *Dr Simon Stafrace -
Director, Alfred Psychiatry*
- 11 December *End of year dinner*

**Meetings return to the Betty Day Centre, 67
Argyle Street, St Kilda from September**

Websites

It is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate the mental health system without access to the internetbut if one embraces technology and is very careful to choose reliable sources there is a lot of excellent material.

Have a look at these two websites developed in the UK: *Choice & Medication* and [let us know if you find them helpful](#). Current consideration

is being given as to whether an Australian licence should be purchased which would allow each state to modify the content to its own requirements.

<http://choiceandmedication.org/cms/>

<http://www.choiceandmedication.org/nelft/>

Nearer to home a website, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, also offers medicine choice:

www.nps.org.au/medicinewise/

The Commonwealth Government has this month launched a new website with information and resources on stress, anxiety and depression:

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

It includes a directory of online information resources, online support services, and links to online communities of people sharing their experiences of stress, anxiety and depression.

In our own region the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre - Southern Region has recently installed a 'Green Button' on the home page of their website: www.carersouth.org.au/ which takes one directly to Mental Health Resources. Check it out and let Lindy Alcorn know if you find the information helpful or have any suggestions for further useful information: l.alcorn@alfred.org.au

Last but very much not least is our own website: www.ispaf.org

Originally developed in the 1990s, it would have been one of the very earliest such resource in Victoria. Recently re-developed by Judith, it is a fund of information. The site deals with a great range of specific issues including legal, financial, recreational and job support but also provides links to a great many other organisations - check it out too!

Community-based mental health services in Victoria

Judith and I attended the last of a series of public consultations last month on the Victorian government's plans to reform the

22/08/2012

community-managed mental health sector. The aim is to better integrate community based mental health support with clinical mental health care, and to make it easier for people to find suitable services.

One outcome of the reforms will be that the number of organisations delivering mental health support in the community will be reduced substantially from the current 105 agencies across the state. This is expected to improve the capacity of the remaining agencies to deliver quality, recovery-focussed services.

Our own observation is that this will not necessarily be the case. Many of the larger organisations have grown by absorbing smaller ones and the purpose for which the smaller ones were established has been lost in the process. We have noticed this in respect of local support groups such as our own, as well as in relation to valued services previously offered for which enthusiasm wanes once funding for new initiatives is sought. This wastes the resources previously poured into an activity that is now neglected.

The duplication of materials over the last twenty years has been immense, as has the duplication of enquiries and reports. The Burdekin Report published in October 1993 said it all 20 years ago and whilst we applaud the additional funds that have flowed to mental health since then, there is an unrealistic reliance on 'throughput' which the cynical might characterise as 'recovery based practice'. Governments have ignored the basic need for shelter, which has seen more and more people homeless, or in gaol to our very great shame. The Victorian Government's aim of improving community based mental health services is laudable but should not be at the expense of clinical services, which are under ever increasing pressure. In general a person with mental illness isn't able to begin the process of recovery until the more severe symptoms of their illness are brought under control. Very often this requires stabilisation on a suitable medication at least in the short to medium term - hence a reliance on clinical services. And somehow the question of housing must be urgently addressed - we need more than pilot projects!

Since the Burdekin Report we have seen alcohol and gambling promoted to a level where State Governments are now heavily dependent on the revenue. Yet we all know of the effect these industries have on general wellbeing, particularly mental health. Of equal concern is the widespread use of illicit

substances by young people who are putting great pressure on inpatient units. Public policy and resource distribution need further review.

Australia is a very lucky country but we seem to be destroying our natural advantages by adopting discordant public policies that conflict with one another.

Centrelink Guidelines

The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre - Southern Region (CRCC) has recently developed a set of guidelines on which they are seeking final comment before posting them on their website. If from your own experience you have anything else you think should be included please let Lindy Alcorn know by 31 July. (See attached draft).

Nomination to ISP&F Committee

With our AGM three weeks away we are calling for nominations for our committee. We meet bi-monthly, generally on the last Monday in the month and our constitution allows for eight committee members and the option to co-opt an extra four. Currently we have nine members, all of whom have been great contributors to the group but we are always looking for 'new blood' in order to keep the organisation vibrant. If you feel you would like to be more involved don't hesitate to make use of the enclosed nomination form...you will be made very welcome!

On the back of the nomination form is our membership form. Membership is free and we do have a number of people on our mailing list who have not formally joined the group. This is not of any great concern, as we exist to help anyone who is seeking support. However, we currently receive a small amount of funding from the Department of Human Services (\$600 this year and next) and greater strength is given to our submissions for funding if we have the endorsement of members. If you think you'd like to join, or know of anyone else who might be interested, please make use of the form.

We look forward to welcoming all those who can make it to our AGM on Tuesday 14 August at the AMREP Centre, Alfred Hospital. Barbara Hocking, our guest speaker will come at 7.30pm and it is a great opportunity to thank her for her 20 year contribution at SANE.

Don't forget that the AGM will commence at 7.00pm and parking can be a little problematic if you are seeking to park in the surrounding streets. We need you to be on time to vote on our name change.