



Telephone (03) 9076 4713
E-mail: isfaf@alfred.org.au
Website: <http://www.ispaf.org>
Office and mail address:
C/- Waiora Clinic
Level 2, 435 Malvern Road, South Yarra 3141

February 2014

Where did January go!? In a blaze of heat it seems that is continuing into February. Lots seems to have happened since our last newsletter in November. Please read your newsletter as there is very important information right at the end.

2013 was a busy year with a plethora of focus groups and inquiries at both Commonwealth and State level. We look forward to the fruits of all that hard work. So far the pace has been unrelenting in 2014 as well.

'OPEN DIALOGUE'

On 19 November several of us ISFAF members attended an all-day forum at the University of Melbourne: *Intro to Open Dialogue and Dialogical Practices* conducted by an American, Will Hall, MA, DipIPW. The Finnish *Open Dialogue* method is a programme which has evolved in Western Lapland, combining a flexible way of responding to people in crisis with contemporary network based and individual therapies. This approach has transformed the way mental health services are delivered in the region and has delivered exceptionally positive outcomes for individuals and their families, particularly people experiencing psychosis.

At the invitation of ISPS (previously known as the International Society for the Psychological Treatments of the Schizophrenias and other Psychoses) the two Finnish pioneers of the method, Markku Sutela MA and Jaakko Seikkula PhD are visiting Australia this month to conduct a training workshop in Sydney 25-28 February. Markku will be at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne 23-24 February. Unfortunately the cost of attendance in Melbourne is quite steep but perhaps not absolutely prohibitive as would be a trip to Sydney:

Fees for first day: General - \$200

ISPS 2014 members and concession - \$160

Fees for both days: General - \$380

ISPS 2014 members \$300

Times: 9:00am – 4:30pm

Location: University of Melbourne, Level 1, Alan Gilbert Building, 161 Barry St, Carlton VIC

Contact: www.isps.org.au or Phil on 0418 887 007

Those of us who heard Will Hall were intrigued, and keen to find out more. ISFAF has acquired several copies of a DVD for our library which was produced by another American, David Mackler. David became interested in the proven success of the practice and travelled to Finland to see for himself. Research comparing outcomes in Lapland with those in Stockholm in the early 1990s indicated a large reduction

in expensive hospital bed days. Moreover, only 17% required ongoing treatment with Neuroleptics in the long term and only one third the number needed a Disability Pension or sick leave as compared with the Stockholm group. See <http://isps.org>

Community - Human Service Reform

On 9 December I was invited by Minister Wooldridge to an all day forum at the Sofitel. I didn't meet anyone else who was not in a paid position but there were several hundred attendees from Government and Non Government Organisations from throughout Victoria.

Central to the discussion was Professor Peter Shergold's final report: *Service Sector Reform - a roadmap for community and human services reform* released in July 2013. It was interesting to witness the gulf between those services embracing reform and those, generally smaller providers, who are struggling with the process. The forum reinforced what Dr Simon Stafrace told us when he spoke to our group in November: in order to simplify services and make them more accessible, it is likely than not more than about three organisations will continue to exist in each catchment area. This may cause some angst in our region which currently has quite a range of providers. It also explains why an organisation such as the MIF is seeking to amalgamate with a State-wide service: the Royal District Nursing Service.

The Minister, Hon Mary Wooldridge, emphasised that in pursuing sector reform the Department is genuinely wanting 'co-design'. She also spoke of the great need to measure outcomes and not just activity levels. Under the proposed reforms, each client should have a 'key worker'. However, in order to develop a single client view with data on the one platform, funding is needed for the IT work.

To summarise Peter Shergold's report: there needs to be genuine client choice, a greater capacity to work with families, services tailored to local needs and collaborative practice between the community sector and the department. This can be further précised as an 'outcome focused, capacity building and a services connect' approach.

It will be interesting to see whether organisations such as ours, which lie outside the mainstream, will continue to receive any funding. Deloitte have been asked to look at other aspects of direct carer support but not yet at peer support groups. Maybe we should be grateful that we continued to be included in forums such as this one.

The new Support Services Central Intake, outlined in our last newsletter, is very much in line with these new directions. We will be hearing from the intake workers Nikki and Erica at our February meeting this month.

Ministerial Communication

7 January - the Victorian Government is currently holding an inquiry into *Social Inclusion for People with a Disability*. In response to our question, we were told that Disability 'can be attributable to intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, physical or neurological impairment or an acquired brain injury (ABI) - or a combination of these'. The inquiry is keen to hear the 'views and experiences of people with a mental illness, their carers and advocates' and we are encouraged to make a submission. For more information: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc/inquiries/inquiry/373>

If you would be interested in contributing to a response please leave a message on our voicemail at 9076 4713.

21 January - in response to a letter written in support of Family Drug Help - which has ceased to receive funding to run support groups such as ours for the families of people addicted to drugs, alcohol and gambling - we heard from the Minister that 'there is scope for peer support to form part of services delivered through the new 'Care and Recovery Co-ordination Stream' in each of the 16 catchments State-wide'. Whether 'carer support' will be funded is not absolutely clear. Members interested in taking the matter further should email the following address: AODReform@health.vic.gov.au

24 January - we received a Ministerial media release announcing that the Government is in the process of investing a total of \$6m in improving the safety of women in Inpatient Units. Much of this funding has already been spent and Alfred Psychiatry received an early allocation which allowed it to open a designated female wing on the Ground Floor IPU early last year.

Mental Health Complaints Review

Towards the end of 2013 we were approached by the Department of Health to provide input into a review of the psychiatric complaints process in Victoria. Accordingly, we organised a small forum, conducted by Louise Clery, from the Department of Health in mid-January. It was attended by a group of about a dozen ISFAF carers who have used the current system. One hopes that the Department is building on the comprehensive **2009 Mental Health Complaints Review Project**, Chaired by John McGrath. The nineteen findings and recommendations are still at:

www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/publications/pubs.htm

There is general agreement that, where practicable, complaints should be made as near as possible to the source of the problem. However, in a public mental health service, in which choice of provider is likely to be limited, a completely independent review process is desirable. Under the new Mental Health Act it is intended that a Mental Health Commission be provided to handle those complaints which can't be resolved locally. Discussion revolved around individual

experiences and we were heard with seeming interest and compassion.

National Mental Health Commission

We owe thanks to Isabel Cid, Alan's wife who arranged for Professor Alan Fels AO, Chairman of the NMHC to meet a small group carers on Saturday 1 February in their own home. The group comprised Sue Johnson, Judi Burstyner and me, ISFAF committee members, and Estelle Malseed who is on the Board of the Victorian Mental Health Carer Network and a driving force behind the new Australian Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) Foundation.

Alan made clear that the Commission is under great pressure in the immediate term to find cost savings. Internal cuts within the Health Departments too are making it difficult for those who remain to keep up with the pace of intended reform. The mental health budget has blown out considerably, especially in relation to pharmaceuticals and also psychology services accessed via GPs. Sue pointed out that the increased demand for pharmaceuticals can be attributed in considerable measure to their increasing use in dementia patients who are far more numerous as the community ages.

All agreed with Alan that the clear message from both State and Federal Governments is that they want only positive suggestions as to how services might be improved without spending any more money and that they are fed up with criticism. To date the recent steep increase in expenditure has not been shown to be matched by improved outcomes.

Topics canvassed were 'Open Dialogue' and the possibility of cost savings from that approach. Sue produced some reports on the research that has been conducted which indicate that outcomes can be improved whilst reducing longer term expenditure. Unfortunately governments are fixated on the short term!

We discussed different housing models and Estelle produced a copy of the recently released report by the Nous group evaluating the housing model being trialled by MIFellowship in the Eastern region (of which Dr Julien Frieden, an MIF board member, spoke to our group last September). Early indications are very positive that time spent accessing services can be reduced although it is too early to assess whether many clients will manage to return to the workforce.

Estelle raised the topic of Borderline Personality Disorder and the lack of available treatment for all but about 2% of that population.

Judi gave a good example illustrating the difficulty in persuading some private psychiatrist to listen to families even when their client is clearly psychotic or delusional. This led to a discussion on the need for vastly improved clinical education both in Universities and on entry to mental health services. The 'train the trainer' education package developed by the Victorian Mental Health Carer Network was mentioned as a valuable resource.

We left Alan a copy of David Mackler's *Open Dialogue DVD* and we still have several available for loan to members: simply leave a message on our voicemail. Alan's parting request was for us to keep the pressure on our local politicians because the outlook, in the short term, is looking very gloomy for mental health.

Wild@heART - Community Arts

The 2014 program, bringing together people who experience disability or mental illness with professional artists, has just been announced. Local programs include:

Song writing in South Melbourne - learn how to write, record, make a video clip and perform your own songs. Wednesday 1-4pm from 5 February
Sol Green Community Centre, Cnr. Coventry & Montague Streets. \$5 per week.

2 Hot 2 Handle Hip Hop Crew

"Melbourne's hottest /accessible HH Crew"
Thursday 10.30 - 1.30pm from 6 February
North Melbourne Town Hall, 521 Queensberry St, cnr. Errol St. \$15 per week.

Artist Mentoring

A year-long mentoring program for artists who experience disability or mental illness to achieve their artistic and professional goals. Places limited - contact Wild@heART for details. Fortnightly Friday 1-4pm from 7 Feb at the North Melbourne Town Hall.

Strumarama

Melbourne's best songwriters night. Quarterly gigs featuring original work by artists who experience disability or mental illness.
First Gig Wednesday 2 April from 7pm
Prince of Wales Hotel, Public Bar, Fitzroy St, St Kilda
Entry by donation.

For more activities see search
Wild@thARTCommunityArts on the internet or call 9326 8870 on a Wednesday.

The Office of the Public Advocate

Free Forum Wed 19 February 2014
10am - 12.30pm at
Level 1, 204 Lygon St Carlton

This free information session for the general public will discuss enduring powers of attorney, medical decision-making and guardianship. Places are limited so registration is essential. For further information and to register contact Lorraine Lipson at OPAeducation@justice.vic.gov.au or call 1300 309 337. Parking is very limited in the area so participants are urged to use public transport.

Local Libraries

Talks on Depression

Tues 18 February - Port Melbourne
Thurs 27 February - St Kilda Library
Time: 6.30pm FREE

Each year in Australia 1 in 25 adults will experience clinical depression. Fortunately there are now many effective treatments. Alfred Hospital psychologist, Michael McGartland, and St Kilda GP, Dr Nick Carr, will discuss the various types of depression and the risk factors, as well as lifestyle changes and psychological therapies that can help, and the benefits and side effects of medication

options. Questions will be welcome. Booking is essential on either 9209 6655 or library@portphillip.vic.gov.au

'Time for you' program at the Kilbride Centre

Some members have asked whether this program which provided services such as massage, cooking lessons and yoga is to continue. Previously funded via the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre, it has been discontinued for several reasons. The focus of the Brigidine nuns who run Kilbride has shifted more towards care for asylum seekers. In addition, the CRCC is expecting a reduction in funds to all programs. Another critical factor was that because the Kilbride is situated at the extreme Western end of our 'catchment', and is not easily accessed by public transport, few carers have been able to take advantage of programs there. However, particular thanks must go to Tracey who provided shiatsu massage and much, much more as well ...even to the extent of helping one of our members with a broken leg move house!

TheMHS Conference 2014

This annual conference is to be held this year in Perth 26-29 August with the theme: *What we share makes us strong*. TheMHS is intended to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas, professional development, networking and debate for professionals, consumers, carers and managers. It aims to promote positive attitudes about mental health and mental illness, and to stimulate debate that will challenge the boundaries of present knowledge and ideas about mental health care. If you have family members in WA maybe this is an opportunity to pay them a visit and the wildflowers should be just beginning too. See www.themhs.org

Review of Carer Programs

Deloitte Access Economics has been appointed by the Department of Health to conduct a review of the following consumer and carer mental health programs

- Consumer consultant program (located in public clinical mental health services);
- Carer consultant program (located in public clinical mental health services);
- Mutual Support and Self Help (MSSH) services which provide information, peer support and carer support. This includes Carer Resource Workers located in Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres;
- Planned Respite (PDRSS program);
- Carer Support Fund (available through public clinical mental health services); and
- Other consumer or carer mental health programs.

As part of the process there is an on-line survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ConsumersCarersFamilies>

If you value these programs please find time to complete a survey or try to attend the forum at Deloitte on 11 February next week.

Penny Lewisohn
Convenor, ISFAF