# The Mental Health Consumer Movement

# Contacts

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**The Headspace Penrith Youth Advisory Committee**

The headspace Penrith Youth Advisory Committee is a group of young people that provide advice on internal processes and service delivery at headspace and also work on projects aimed at improving mental health literacy and reducing mental health stigma in the community.

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

(02) 4720 8800

[madeleine.fabian@ucmh.org.au](mailto:madeleine.fabian@ucmh.org.au)

**Westclub (Richmond PRA)**

An outreach Day-to-Day Living program that provides an opportunity for people living with mental illness to socialize, engage in the community and participate in recreational activities.

[www.richmondpra.org.au](http://www.richmondpra.org.au)

Penrith (02) 9393 9121

Hawkesbury (02) 9393 9121

The Consumer Voice

The consumer voice is the views, perspectives, attitudes and interests of consumers and their support network. The consumer voice provides a means for consumers to share their lived experiences with others and communicate their needs and priorities. The consumer voice can be heard through involvement on committees as well as particular methods in which information is accessed in the 1st person such as:

* Community Consultations.
* Testimony.
* Storytelling.
* Case Studies.
* Focus Groups.
* Dialogue, discussion and debate.

**National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF)**

The national, united voice for consumers and carers that contributes towards the development of mental health policy and sector development in Australia.

[www.nmhccf.org.au](http://www.nmhccf.org.au)

**Being**

The state consumer peak-body that provides ongoing mechanisms for consumer participation in mental health policy, service development and evaluation.

[www.being.org.au](http://www.being.org.au)

**ARAFMI (NSW)**

The state-wide peak body that provides support for carers, family and friends of the mentally ill.

[www.arafmi.org](http://www.arafmi.org)

**Partners in Recovery (PIR) Consumer and Carer Regional Development Team (RDT)**

A group of voluntary consumers and carers created by the local Partners in Recovery (PIR) to provide a platform that builds on the capacity of consumers and carers in the Nepean Blue Mountains Primary Health Network (PHN) (Australian Government).

(02) 4708 8100

**Consumer and Carer Advisory Committee (CACAC)**

A voluntary advisory committee of consumers and carers that aims to review and provide advice about the policies, procedures, publications, business plans, design, evaluation, the consumer and carer workforce as well as safety and quality initiatives of the Mental Health Service in the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NSW Government)

Ian Dennis [ian.dennis@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ian.dennis@health.nsw.gov.au)

**Consumer Partnership Advisory Committee (CPAC)**

A committee of ‘caregivers’ at the St John of God Hospital – Richmond that reviews the information collected by consumer representatives about the facilities, programs and services of the hospital. On a monthly basis, consumer representatives talk to inpatients to gain input. This is then discussed in a meeting with senior staff members. CPAC is associated with the Private Mental Health Consumer and Carer Network.

(02) 4571 1552 [pamela.lawrence@sjog.org.au](mailto:pamela.lawrence@sjog.org.au)

A number of groups, organisations and consumer-led initiatives have surfaced in the Nepean Blue Mountains Region to promote the consumer voice, offer peer support, provide advocacy opportunities, play an advisory role and provide accessible ways to find the right information and resources. Whether a consumer is on the disability pension, leaving hospital or correctional facilities, looking for housing support, needing to be linked to programs and services, is taking new medication or so on, it is important to be linked into the contacts within the region. The Nepean Blue Mountain Region provides many entry points into the consumer movement including:

What is The Mental Health Consumer Movement?

The mental health consumer movement is an assortment of groups, organisations, networks and a workforce that provides a range of resources programs and services to mental health consumers. Campaigning for improved services and consumer-led alternatives to the ‘insane’ mental health system of the times, the mental health consumer movement developed out of the 1970s and 1980s women’s, disability and gay rights movements. Today, the consumer movement includes a number of initiatives related to:

* Consumer-led groups, organisations and activities.
* Consumer participation in the governance, planning, implementation, evaluation and development of the programs and services that affect their lives.
* Consumer rights activism, representation and leadership.
* Campaigns that acknowledge and promote the ‘consumer voice.’
* The development of the peer support networks.
* Building and supporting a paid consumer workforce.
* Consumer-run education and training.
* Peer-led research and evaluation.
* Mechanisms that promote consumer engagement, involvement and collaboration.
* Consumer-led systematic advocacy that promotes issues related to mental health consumers such as social justice, stigma and discrimination.
* Online consumer resources and information.



Who is a Mental Health Consumer?

A mental health consumer is a person with the lived experience of mental illness. A person with the lived experience is any person who:

* Lives with or is in the process of recovering from a mental health issue, emotional distress or a mental illness.
* Has a diagnosis of a psychiatric condition or mental health illness.
* Takes a form of psychiatric medication.
* Uses or acquires mental health programs, services and products for direct consumption or ownership.
* Is voluntarily or involuntarily residing in a psychiatric hospital or a community housing facility.
* Participates in mental health research.
* Engages in mental health events or activities in the community.

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***“Consumers are the community. They are the end users of services and are the most directly influenced by the decisions that affect their lives. They are therefore the primary stakeholder, because if the consumer wasn’t there, none of the other stakeholders would be there... ”***

***“20 years ago, consumers were excluded, their experiences of services were not valued and they were not involved in debate. People with mental illness have battled for the past two decades to have their voice heard and their experience used to drive reform of the mental health system. Today, there are a number of consumer initiatives on the ground accompanied by a push to develop consumer groups and organisations and to build a consumer workforce... ”***

*(Anglicare Tasmania and Tasmanian* Mental *Health Consumer Network 2009)*

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