



# Council Chatter

Newsletter of the WA Mental Health Advisory Council

## Council Members

- Barry MacKinnon AM  
(Chair)
- Hon. Eric Ripper  
(Deputy Chair)
- Dr Amit Banerjee
- Dr John Edwards
- Pam Gardner
- Chris Gostelow
- Petra Liedel
- Aimee Sinclair
- Lindsay Smoker
- Dr Bernadette Wright
- Dr Michael Wright
- Prof. Dianne Wynaden

Contact us at:  
mhac@mhc.wa.gov.au

## From the Chair... The Compulsory Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Treatment Program

On July 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, the State Government approved the development of a model of service and associated legislation for a compulsory alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment program in Western Australia.

Since this announcement the Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC) has been briefed by the Mental Health Commission (MHC) on the proposal. This briefing indicated that formal planning for a trial compulsory treatment facility in Western Australia was under way. A Discussion Paper canvassing many of the issues surrounding the trial was released by the MHC for which submissions closed on December 1st 2016.

The MHAC, together with the Alcohol and Other Drugs Advisory Board (AODAB) sponsored a Forum on November 11th to enable attendees to provide their views on the proposed trial.

Discussion during the Forum included the following points;

- \* Most participants felt that it is important to ensure that this program does not give the impression that it is the “magic bullet” to provide a “cure” to severe AOD dependence. To that extent, publicity surrounding the trial should ensure that the range of treatment options available are detailed and that the trial is seen to be one of those options that may be suitable for some of those affected.
- \* Whatever the duration of the compulsory detention there should be no expectation that this is the extent of the treatment program. The trial should include comprehensive patient follow-up conducted by co-ordinated community treatment teams.
- \* The trial should examine how best to accommodate people from regional communities.
- \* As part of the compulsory AOD treatment program the impact of the compulsory detention on the family/carers of the person being detained and treated need to be taken into account.

It is expected that an Exposure Draft Bill that will give legislative support to the trial will be released in December for discussion.

**Barry MacKinnon**  
*Chair, Mental Health Advisory Council*

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## Happy Holidays !

*The Mental Health  
Advisory Council wishes  
you and your loved ones,  
a safe and peaceful  
holiday season*

## Member Profile: Rod Astbury

I am the Chief Executive Officer of the WA Association of Mental Health (WAAMH) which is WA's peak body for community mental health. In addition to my role with the Mental Health Advisory Council, I am also on the Board of the WA Primary Health Alliance, which governs WA's three Primary Health Networks, and of Community Mental Health Australia, the national peak body for community mental health.

I began my career as a social worker in community mental health. I worked in child and family services, disability services and was the Principal Social Worker with the WA Department of Immigration. I have substantial public sector management experience with the Department for Community Services, Disability Services Commission and Department of Health (Mental Health Division), and was the general manager for WA and the NT of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service from 2003-2011.

I have a lived family experience of depression and

suicide from which I have developed a passion for mental health reform; for overcoming stigma, shifting the focus of mental health to early intervention and the community and for person-centred and family inclusive services.

I graduated from the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2013 and hold a Masters degrees in Business Administration and Public Policy (1993). My family is from the WA Wheatbelt and I have lived in WA most of my life. Together with my partner Lenca, and our mostly-independent son, Martin, we are inner city, north of the river, Eagles fans !



## Frost in the Wheatbelt - Lindsay Smoker

The season of 2016 was shaping up to be one of the best farming seasons for many years with good rains and growing conditions throughout the winter.

Then, with September, and cold mornings, came the frosts. Many WA farmers woke to minus 3.5 degrees and frozen crops.

What had promised to be one of the best seasons ever was ripped out of our hands as we faced crop losses of between 40 and 90 percent. These losses are not just to the individual farmers but also to Western Australia, at around \$675 million dollars to \$1.2 billion dollars.

Everyone is reeling from the extreme and sudden real downturn in their lives which is affecting the whole

community and their mental health. An opportunity to overcome our debts has been lost, leaving us devastated by the cruel tricks of nature. The farmers have really taken a hit which has a flow effect to their families, their local communities and to the whole of WA.

There is a dramatic effect on local schools with some families having to split up just so the mother can live in metropolitan Perth in order that the children can continue their education.

In rural communities, workers have had to be laid off. Under these circumstances workers do not return to their jobs as they find alternative jobs elsewhere and are lost to our community. Some machinery dealers have lost sales which negatively impact on the income of their business.

This frost has really affected most of our community to the point of causing a significant mental health problem.

### *Values of the Mental Health Advisory Council*

*Value and respect diversity and work in an inclusive and accessible way with particular sensitivity to advocating for the most unheard voices;*

*Explore innovation in Mental Health with curiosity and seek out the best local, national and international practices; and;*

*Promote hope for recovery for individuals with mental ill-health and their families/carers*