

# Community Consultation Report

## *Mental Health Act 1986 Review*

### **Key points raised by participants at the Bairnsdale public forum on 20 February 2009** (Approximately 12 participants)

Note the identified 'suggested changes' do not necessarily correlate with 'discussed challenges'. This is consistent with the flow of conversations at the forums. Further, a wide range of opinions were expressed at the forums and the identified 'suggested changes' were not necessarily universally supported.

#### **1. Rethinking involuntary orders**

Broad issues discussed include: role of general practitioners which should be recognised in the Act, particularly in rural areas; the need for the Act to accommodate extra time where a person is undergoing assessment in rural areas; ambulance transport of people for several hours without powers to sedate; community treatment orders which should not be a substitute for pathways to recovery; shortening of community treatment order length and more frequent review of community treatment orders to assess the consumer's progress.

#### **2. The Act's role in promoting recovery**

Broad issues discussed include: a greater focus on recovery in the Act; support for treatment plans to be more holistic (psychosocial) with requirements for broader consultation with all relevant parties and advice to consumers about various treatment options, including medication side effects.

#### **3. Patient participation in decisions about treatment and care**

Broad issues discussed include: the need to provide more information about treatment and care to both voluntary and involuntary consumers (verbally as well as in writing).

#### **4. A stronger human rights focus**

Broad issues discussed include: the need to take into account diverse cultures in the Act; support for second psychiatric opinions for ECT; a requirement for provision of more information about ECT to consumers and carers to help reduce fear of ECT; a requirement for the treatment plan to work as a tool to keep consumers engaged in their treatment; support for introduction of a Code of Practice, for example, in relation to treatment plan development and addressing seclusion and restraint.

#### **5. Effective and accessible mechanisms for overseeing treatment and care**

Broad issues discussed include: a shorter initial review period for an involuntary order; the introduction of a local board to review involuntary orders; inclusion of an indigenous elder on the board for indigenous consumers.

#### **6. Responding to the needs of families and carers**

Broad issues discussed include: greater recognition of carers in the Act; a need to educate carers about strategies to cope when the consumer is distressed; improvement of information sharing for carers and between agencies to help facilitate a consumer's pathway to recovery.