

Queensland Mental Health Consumer Representative Peak Establishment Project Steering Committee Communique

30 June 2021

This was the final Project Steering Committee (Committee) meeting. The meeting was online due to COVID-19 restrictions. The first half of the meeting was a chance for the project team to update the Committee on the project's progress, after a long break between meeting 9 and meeting 10. The second half of the meeting was the Committee's first opportunity to meet the board directors for the new Queensland mental health consumer representative peak (new MH consumer peak) organisation. During this time, Committee members offered words of advice, wisdom and encouragement to the new MH consumer peak's officeholders and shared their hopes for the future of the new organisation.

Acknowledgement

The Queensland Mental Health Commission (the Commission) acknowledges all people who have personal experience of mental ill-health. We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We also acknowledge the many organisations, service providers and community members who work in partnership with us and who generously share their views, knowledge, and expertise. Your voices are all essential to our work.

Interim CEO recruitment

The process to recruit an interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the new MH consumer peak has been finalised. Interviews took place in May and the newly appointed chairperson of the board joined the selection panel, along with two Committee members and a staff member from the Commission.

The successful candidate will be announced via the Commission's July eNews bulletin and officially appointed to the role when the new MH consumer peak is registered.

Induction for new board directors

A three-day induction for the new board directors was held 23 to 25 June 2021. This was the first time the new officeholders had all met in person so there were a combination of formal and informal opportunities for the group to get to know each other.

The induction included a short introductory governance course (1.5 days) delivered by the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Various guest presenters also came to the induction to talk about the project's background and the mental health sector in Queensland.

Several CEOs and board chairs from peer organisations and other state, territory and national consumer/carer peaks generously participated in a panel discussion where they shared learnings and experiences with the new board directors.

Company registration

The Commission has started the process of registering the new MH consumer peak as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The new MH consumer peak does not have a name yet so it will be registered with a "placeholder name". A process to determine an ongoing name for the organisation will be progressed by the new officeholders (the interim CEO and the board).

The organisation will be registered through the Australian Government's Business Registration Service (BRS). After the new MH consumer peak has been registered, it will still be several months before it will be "operational". There are strategies and plans to be worked out, equipment to purchase, administrative financial and insurance arrangements to be set up, premises and staff members to find, and stakeholders to meet. It is expected that an official "launch" will take place once the organisation has had the chance to find its feet.

Handover meeting between Committee and board of the new MH consumer peak

Between May 2020 and July 2021, Committee members have gone through the process of:

- being invited or recruited to the Committee
- 1 orientation
- 10 meetings
- 1 reflection session
- 2 capacity building sessions
- 1 social event
- individual catch ups
- 100s of correspondence emails, phone calls and text messages with the Project Team and each other

The Committee have made decisions about the new MH consumer peak's business structure and how it will be governed. The constitution which has been developed for the new MH consumer peak, and the objects contained within the constitution, reflects these decisions.

Other documents which have been developed include:

- A Governance Manual which defines the role of the board and delineates how the board will carry out its responsibilities based on the elements set out in the constitution
- An Operations Pack containing an Operations Manual, an Employee Handbook, and an Operational Policies and Procedures Manual
- A first-year business and auspice plan

Handover messages

The Committee hopes the new MH consumer peak will:

- impel accountability of the mental health system to consumers
- seek to de-stigmatise mental illness so that people are treated just like anyone else who has an illness
- protect and promote human rights
- amplify the voice of consumers using public mental health services
- input into and influence mental health policy
- lead, drive and support pro-active, consumer-led reform instead of only re-acting to requests to repair, massage, or fix things which are broken
- provide a range and choice of inclusive engagement options so that all consumers have a voice
- maintain a strong regional perspective
- include mental health carers and families

Communique

- ensure everything which the peak does is underpinned by the experiential lived experience and expertise of consumers; consumer engage must underlie everything the peak does (“nothing about us without us”)

Committee members also suggested:

- having some board meetings which are open and accessible to consumers
- hold regular forums where consumers can gather and meet with the CEO to ask questions and be involved in discussions
- act as a central point of contact for consumer-led existing groups and networks so that feedback and dialogue travels up and down the communication channels
- engage with consumers who use services who are not involved in mental health advocacy or with mental health groups or networks
- to never forget the consumers and grassroots consumer groups who have experienced mistreatment and injustice and who have fought for consumer rights, often at personal cost. They are the reason the peak can exist. Develop partnerships with those people and understand the history of the consumer/psychiatric survivor movement before breaking into system advocacy. Understand what those people went through and what service users continue to experience.

Next steps

This last meeting concluded the work of the Committee. The group will meet again for a reflection session and Committee members will continue to be involved in the evaluation of the project to establish the new MH consumer peak.

The new MH consumer peak will be funded by Queensland Government and it will be auspiced and supported by the Commission during the establishment phase.

Regular project updates will continue to be posted on the Queensland Mental Health Commission's [consumer peak webpage](#) and shared through the Commission's [eNews](#). Eventually the new MH consumer peak will have its own website and social media presence.

The project team can still be contacted by email on ConsumerPeak@qmhc.qld.gov.au.

Note the email account is not monitored outside business hours.