

## **Mental health service approaches must change**

05/09/2008 08:20:00 AM

The way we treat New Zealanders experiencing mental distress and loss of well-being is outdated, ineffective, and must change, says the Mental Health Advocacy Coalition (MHAC) in a discussion document launched at a major international conference in Auckland this week.

In *Destination: Recovery, Te Ūnga ki Uta: Te Oranga*, the 16-member coalition is urging a new approach to mental health services at a population level, with service users, their families, the workforce, communities and politicians working together to improve health and well-being for all, including those with mental distress.

"Discrimination and stereotypes in the community about mental distress have given us practices which have not served us well," says Judi Clements, Chair of MHAC and Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation. "Emotional concerns about 'safety' have shaped approaches such as compulsory treatments, locked wards and security guards, even when there is evidence that such approaches are ineffective."

MHAC believes that the purpose of mental health services and other community responses should be in supporting people to lead their own recovery, so they can regain personal power and a valued place in their whānau and communities.

"Put simply, people with mental distress want the same out of life as others," says Judi Clements. "Traditionally, mental health services have tended to focus purely on minimizing symptoms. It's time for that to change, but this change needs to be coordinated at a national level, with a unified vision."

In line with this vision, *Destination: Recovery* has incorporated mental health consumer and clinical perspectives in its recommendations.

"We are challenging services to adopt a fundamentally different approach of working with people to promote their recovery," says Vicki Burnett, MHAC member and Consumer Advisor for the Northern Consumer Network. "We're arguing that primary mental health should be at the centre of service delivery, which is exciting because it would allow people to be treated in a whole sense."

Dr David Codyre, who represents the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RNZCP) on the coalition, says: "We would like to see individual clinicians, providers, and services 'walking the talk' and reflecting on how service delivery needs to change to be truly recovery-focused. We see the recommendations in the document as key levers to achieving this change."

46.6% of the population are predicted to meet criteria for a mental disorder at some time in their lives. One in every five New Zealanders will express some form of mental illness within the next year.

"Mental health and well-being are everybody's business, because all New Zealanders will be touched by mental distress and loss of well-being at some point in their lives, either through direct experience, or through friends and family/whānau," says Judi Clements.

"This is an issue for everyone, and we hope that in this election year that *Destination: Recovery* will generate the discussion which is urgently needed around how services in New Zealand can best support everyone's mental health and well-being."

*Destination: Recovery* will be launched at a plenary session of the 18<sup>th</sup> annual TheMHS (The Mental Health Services) conference, at 1:30pm, Friday 5<sup>th</sup> September, Auckland Convention Centre. TheMHS is an international mental health educational forum attracting more than 1,000 mental health clinicians, managers, consumers, carers, families, researchers, educators and policy makers.

To download *Destination: Recovery, Te Ūnga ki Uta: Te Oranga* (3.55MB) [click here](#)

**ENDS**

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