



## MHCN Annual General Meeting Agenda & Minutes, 22nd Nov 2024

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| <b>Venue:</b>           | Via Zoom                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                           |
| <b>Date &amp; Time:</b> | Thursday, 22nd November 2024<br>3.00pm – 5.00pm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                           |
| <b>Board:</b>           | Jenny Learmont (President); Lynda Walton (Vice President); Andrew Pryor (Treasurer); Elizabeth Priestley (Secretary); Chris Avent (OBM), Catherine Wendell (OBM), Yolande Williams (OBM); Robert Wellman (OBM) Raja Gopalan (OBM) and Jonathan Harms (CEO).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                           |
|                         | <b>Attending:</b> Andrew Pryor, Chris Avent, Jenny Learmont, Robert Wellman (Arrived 4.00pm); Lynda Walton, Elizabeth Priestley; Jonathan Harms, Richard Baldwin Laura Knight, Prasheela Karan, Armie Farooqui, Ellie Christen, Colleen Kosowicz, Jade Curran, Anne Stedman, Terri Marsh(4.20pm-4.40pm)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                           |
| <b>3.00pm</b>           | <b>Welcome</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Jonathan Harms, CEO       |
| <b>3.02pm</b>           | <b>Acknowledgement</b> of Country & Acknowledgment of Carers & Lived Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Jonathan Harms, CEO       |
| <b>3.05pm</b>           | <b>Apologies</b> – Raja Gopalan, Yolande Williams, Douglas Holmes, Alyce Cannon, Jess Tracey, Alex Brown                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Jonathan Harms, CEO       |
|                         | <b>Confirmation of Minutes</b> November 2023 Annual General Meeting – proposal to accept. Accepted unanimously.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Jonathan Harms, CEO       |
|                         | <b>Opening of Annual General Meeting:</b><br><br><b>President's Report – Jenny Learmont</b><br>As a peak body we aim to influence government policy funding and engage in systemic advocacy to ensure that the rights of families, carers, and kin caring for a person experiencing mental illness are upheld. Mental health Carers New South Wales follows the dictum. <i>Don't speak about us without us.</i> We talk with carers and listen to what they think and want, so we can represent their view. Their lived experience makes them powerful advocates for both people who live with experience of caring and for people with mental illness. A major change in the mental health landscape took place in 2024. This was the formation of 2 National Mental Health peaks, the Mental Health Carers Australia and the Consumer Alliance. The Hon. | Jenny Learmont, President |



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|               | <p>Emma McBride, Assistant for Mental Health Assistant Minister for Mental Health, announced that the 2 National Public Health would receive three-year funding. Carers and consumers now had a national voice with direct access to government, and their combined voice was being heard and was important. It is a great credit to the current national government that the peaks have been funded. They are the 1st such peaks in the world. Mental Health Carers New South Wales has limited resources and a small staff, and yet our staff, and yet our staff produce the most amazing outputs, and consistently perform far above their weight. The President highlighted some of these achievements.</p> <p>The President thanked the Board for their commitment in time and in expertise, along with the CEO Jonathan Harms and our major funding body, the New South Wales Ministry for Health for its ongoing support and recognition of the important role we play as a mental health carer organisation.</p> |                     |
| <b>3.15pm</b> | <b>Presentation of 2023 – 2024 Annual Report</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Jonathan Harms, CEO |
|               | <p>In this 50th anniversary year for MHCN, there's a lot to look back and reflect on both the last 12 months and the last 50 years since Margaret Lukes convened the 1st meeting in 1974</p> <p>This financial year MHCN has had a lot of activity and achievements. We have renewed our core funding with NSW Health and now have 3 yearly contracts in place. We also received additional one-off funding for projects this year to co-design some resources for forensic carers and to upgrade our online delivery of carer training which has been very popular. We also renewed our Disability Advocacy Futures Program Psychosocial Disability project funding. This is funded by the Department of Communities and Justice and has been extended for another 2 years. We've received funding from the DCJ to deliver a Carer and Consumer Advocacy Community of Practice</p>                                                                                                                                      |                     |



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|               | <p>collaborating with Lived Experience Australia. We recruited 18 participants and recently held the 4th meeting.</p> <p>Our Capacity, Development and Stakeholder Engagement teams have been rolling out new resources, including 6 new pamphlets and new training, as well as continuing to deliver the old favourites</p> <p>The Business Organisation Support Services team helped us recruit some excellent new team members this year and work together with everyone to achieve accreditation and to implement continuous improvement systems across the organization</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                          |
| <b>3.30pm</b> | <b>MHCN Staff Year in Review:</b> The Staff touched briefly on their wins for the year and current and upcoming projects.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | MHCN Staff in attendance |
|               | <p><b>Prasheela Karan – Senior Policy Officer</b></p> <p>We continue to convene our 2 carer groups, the Carer Connection meeting providing much stronger connection with the Policy and Advocacy team. We also have the Carers of Forensic and Corrections Patients Network Meeting. These meetings are very important for us, because they establish a channel to have regular communication and frank communication.</p> <p>Another achievement is the completion of 6 new carer resources, and they have been translated in other languages.</p> <p>We've made numerous submissions, and all are on our website.</p> <p>We continue to advocate on committees and advisory groups, including on family focused recovery and child and youth mental health. Our advocacy on psychosocial disability and the need to</p> |                          |



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improve services has expanded through the funding from DAFP

A highlight was our submission to the Law Reform Commission on Stigma and Media Reporting, which we see time and time again, which stigmatizes mental health carers, and especially carers of forensic and corrections patients. Another was my work with Jonathan on a submission to the NDIS on the experiences of carers in rural, regional and remote areas. We were then invited to put in an application to present our research at the Rural Mental Health Conference, a National Conference and we were successful.

Finally, another highlight for me has been to advocate on family focused recovery in the advisory group that we attend that includes grandparents and siblings in the family focused recovery framework

### **Richard Baldwin – Senior Policy Officer**

Continue to represent mental health carers on several committees and activities with the Ministry of Health. We have a seat at the table, and what was used to be called the New South Wales Program Council Mental Health Program Council is now called the Network Partnership, but it represents the big bodies in mental health areas meeting up with the ministry every quarter.

I'm also on the couple of committees related to Older Persons Mental health. We hosted a focus group last year for that branch in the Ministry on the review of their plan for older persons mental health across New South Wales.

There's another couple of committees that I sit on with the ministry. One of them is the design working party, which looks at the functionality of the electronic medical record across New South Wales in



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relation to the elements of that that support mental health care.

Another group that I sit on is called the Living Longer Group, which is an exercise in data mining by the Ministry of Health. They've been comparing over the last few years the statewide database of people with a diagnosis of mental illness, with the total number of people receiving health care in New South Wales and looking at the different rates of physical illness for people with a mental health diagnosis compared to the general population.

### **Armie Farooqui – Policy Engagement Officer**

One of my main responsibilities has been supporting the Carers of Forensic and Correction Patients Network or CFPCPN, collaborating closely with carers and colleagues to co-design a new web page that aims to support new carers finding their way through the justice system.

And another major accomplishment this year has been our submission on loneliness and social isolation, focusing on carers and the urgent need for respite and other supportive initiatives to aid carers in their roles

We recently drafted a policy statement on chemical restraint which is now being refined.

As wellbeing officer, I developed a comprehensive well-being survey for our team, which aims to understand staff needs and encourage a safe and supportive environment, where everyone of where everyone feels comfortable and valued. I have had the opportunity to attend various courses and conferences that have equipped me to better support both our staff and the carers.

### **Ellie Christen – Policy Engagement Officer**

Currently on the Disability Advocacy Futures Program project with Elise Cannon, who is the Psychosocial Disability, Research and Policy coordinator. I have



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also been helping to organize the Mental Health Carer Connection meetings and have had many opportunities to develop my knowledge and skills. At TheMHS, I learned about the intersections with societal issues and mental health which has included climate change as a going mental health issue due to the ongoing and complex trauma from the continuous recurrence of climate, induced natural disasters. I also attended a panel about the deficit of cultural safety amongst mental health spaces. The key message was that recognition of colonialism barriers to care and lack of systemic representation is an important 1st step in making mental health care more accessible and culturally safe to everyone. It was insightful for the 1st Nations people's yarns meetings with the DFP team that run quarterly in collaboration with Being. The purpose of these yarns is to help inform us on how to best engage with 1st Nations peoples and receive their input on advocacy issues that impact them and their communities, including the raise the age campaign

On DAFP we have attended regular meetings with the National Disability Advocacy Network and co-produced submissions, including the pre-budget submission on disability, advocacy, funding, and on the NDIS. The Minister for Disability Inclusion has also attended a few of these meetings to receive feedback, and earlier this year we held consultations on housing, access to for psychosocial disability and drafted a position paper on it.

This has since been reviewed by NDAN and the Housing Mental Health Agreement Community, with positive feedback. The paper is aimed to be released and circulated before the end of this year, and our goals for next year are to produce a position paper on education for people with psychosocial disabilities and on the New South Wales suicide prevention legislation.



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### **Colleen Kosowicz – Carer Peer Network Support Officer.**

We have supported many carers trying to navigate the justice system. Through my research I found the carers webpage is not adequate, so we're working on that web page now. We have different needs from other carers in the community. My role has been to look at what questions new carers may need to ask when their loved ones enter the corrections or forensic system. We have looked into partly creating a brochure for carers of forensic and corrections. We've had some amazing speakers present at our network meetings, giving carers much needed support, information and encouragement, which is something that we need. Our carers have sent letters to ministers, asking for more support for carers of forensic and corrections. Often carers have been forgotten when someone enters the justice system, and it's very hard for carers to be able to work with community carers because we have different needs. There is still that stigma.

### **Jade Curran – Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator**

We completed the information Linkages and Capacity Project, which was funded by the Department of Social Services, and involved co-reviewing and co-designing 5 training modules with carers of someone with a lived experience of psychosocial disability. For the duration of this project, we delivered 67 in person and online training sessions.

Alongside some of the partnerships we had this year were with Central Coast ARAFMI where we went to the Community Centre in Narara and delivered 3 in person training sessions, and then 2 online for their community. We also partnered with Parramatta Head to Health in March delivering 3 advocacy training sessions in Parramatta. One of the key highlights was when we went to a local health district and delivered a tailored training session inclusive care planning that we already had established but changed to fit a



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more clinician perspective. Because it came from the perspective of carers, it gave the staff members time to discuss possible obstacles or enablers that they've come across when working with carers collaboratively alongside the person in the hospital. We took that information and gave it back to the CEO to inform how we plan with advocacy.

This year we went to a local organization and delivered a purposeful storytelling training session for an advisory group/mentoring program. That provides pathways to work on training and education for women impacted by domestic and family violence.

### **Anne Stedman- Carer Peer Trainer and Deputy CEO**

The highlight has been overseeing all the new recruits, because we'd been such a small team. Processes, procedures needed to be put in place as we started to grow, ensuring that new staff members are supported.

We are managing our processes that align with each other across MHCN. At the various MHCN meetings we are keeping our eyes and ears open to the issues that get raised there. We are collecting those, putting them into a major spreadsheet, where we can refer to issues that are coming from the grassroots, ensuring that we are hearing from carers. We are reaching a lot more carers now across New South Wales

I've been trying to lighten Jonathan's burden a little bit with the meetings taking on a few more, reconnecting with a few different people. I have been engaging with NSW Health around certain things like suicide, prevention and proper protocols, carer engagement, the Carer Act, etc. with the belief that working together clinicians, carers, and the consumer can work together on their recovery journey.





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The accreditation process was gruelling, but every single staff member is aware of our policies and procedures and compliant with all the acts, etc.

### **Laura Knight – Organisation & Development Officer**

We are celebrating our 50th anniversary this year, so I've been tasked with putting together that event, at Parliament House on the 28th of November.

I've spent the last 11 months working on accreditation, under the watchful eye of Julie Millard, who we hired to be a consultant to work with us on this. I was very fortunate to work with Julie who has so much experience in this field. We had the accreditors come in for 2 days in May. They did give us a commendation on the advocacy that we conduct with mental health carers in New South Wales. They said our work was quite professional and evidence-based regarding submissions, representations, and letters to external agents and government bodies.

We did not meet accreditation immediately but given a handful of things to do. We spent June to October working on 3 key areas of risk management, feedback and complaints and quality management. We submitted the work, and we now accredited. We now have a 3-year quality improvement plan to work on.

The strategic plan for 2024-26 has been finalized and we've done a bit of work on our website.

We are creating a document management system, done a bit of work around. HR including adopting some new HR information software and engaging an external HR contractor.

### **Jonathan Harms – CEO**

I acknowledge that we've had some achievements in the last 12 months around research. Prasheela Karan presented her poster on the experience of carers regarding the NDIS in regional areas at the Rural Mental Health Conference a week or so ago and we

**MHCN Mental Health Carers NSW Inc.**

*Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health*

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|               | <p>were acknowledged as a co-author with an academic Abner Poon (UNSW) in an academic article around co-design, and the inclusion of parent carers in co-design when designing services for young people. I should acknowledge that Eileen McDonald, a Carer representative with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, has joined us today, and that mental health carers, New South Wales, was part of the Stakeholder Advisory group working with the NMHCCF on a research project around the experience of mental health carers during Covid, under Eileen's successful chairing. This research was not only successfully concluded, but received a TheMHS Award in August this year, one of the joint recipients of that.</p>                                                                                                                                                  |                         |
| <b>4.14pm</b> | <p><b>Presentation of 2022–2023 Annual Financial Report:</b> Report on the 2023/24 financial year for MHCN. The audited financial statements are as presented and have been included in the annual report</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Andrew Pyror, Treasurer |
|               | <p>The income for the year of \$962,000, included the second year of the DAFP project with Dept of Communities &amp; Justice. This has been extended for a further 2 years but otherwise does reflect some reductions in some other grants that came to an end.</p> <p>Most of the funds continue to be utilized in paying staff, paid either through wages or consultancy arrangements as well as expenses, such as rent, accounting, insurance and carer sitting fees and resources, resulting in a net deficit of \$125,660.</p> <p>We budgeted for a deficit this year, due to utilizing the surplus monies of the last year. Some amounts not fully utilized may need to be refunded to the funder where they haven't been fully utilized. Notably the DAFP project, mainly due to the timing of recruitment of the workforce and finding out we were successful quite late in the year.</p> |                         |



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MHCN still remains in a cumulative retained earnings position of \$277,000, as of 30 June 2024.

The balance sheet position remains solid with total assets of \$1.17 million in liabilities, both inclusive of the Bequest previously received and held under trust and is being applied for its specific purpose.

Excluding the Bequest, the cash position was around \$540,000 as of 30 June 2024.

I note the supporting order report from our auditors, Thomas Davison & Co. I thank our auditors, as well as those at Bridges Accounting for providing our financial services for the year.

I confirmed at the previous AGM, our auditors, Thomas Davis and Co. were appointed for 2 years through to 30 June 2024, and we proposed to the members today to extend them for a further 2 years through to 30 June 2026.

So, there's 3 motions that I put to the members today.

### **Motion 1.**

**I move a motion to approve the financial report, and the audit report as presented for MHCN for the year ending 30th June 2024**

**Approved.**

### **Motion 2.**

**I move to confirm the appointment of Thomas Davis and Co. to continue as the auditors for the 2 years ending 30th June 2026.**

**Approved.**

### **Motion 3.**

**I move a motion to file the financial report for the year ending 30, June 2024 as presented with the Department of Fair Trading.**

**Approved**



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| <b>4.25 pm</b> | <b>MHCN Board Elections for 2024/25</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Terri Marsh<br>Returning Officer |
|                | <p>The Positions of President, Vice-President and Treasurer have elapsed. Nominations have been called for those positions.</p> <p><b>President: Jenny Learmont (sole nomination)</b><br/> <b>Vice President: Linda Walton (sole nomination)</b><br/> <b>Treasurer: Andrew Prior (sole nomination)</b></p> <p>There being no other nominations for the above positions, all three candidates are duly elected.</p> <p>Three ordinary board member positions are vacant. There were 4 nominations for 3 positions. Elected were.</p> <p><b>Douglas Holmes</b><br/> <b>Matt, Floro</b><br/> <b>Raj Kapalan</b></p> <p>Rob Wellman, the retiring Board Member, was thanked for his many years of service to MHCN and we hope a relationship continues</p> <p>President Jenny Learmont congratulated all those elected to the Board .</p> |                                  |
| <b>4.40pm</b>  | <b>Eunice Lonergan Carer Respite Grants Draw.</b> The following carer's names were drawn at random from a hat:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Laura Knight                     |
|                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nassima Mustafa,</li> <li>• Kerry Cameron,</li> <li>• Elizabeth Gardner.</li> <li>• Caroline Humby,</li> <li>• Julie Clark</li> <li>• Sharon Panowitz</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                  |
| <b>4.45pm</b>  | <b>General Business</b><br>Thank you to those who attended the meeting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Jonathan Harms, CEO              |
| <b>4.45pm</b>  | <b>AGM Close</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | All                              |