

National Mental Health Consumer Organisation Establishment Project

Consumer Reference Group Final Communique – June 2015

Colleagues,

This is my last communique to you as chair of the Consumer Reference Group (CRG).

Many of you will know that, in the 2015 federal Budget, the government has redirected the funds that were allocated to the launch of the new organisation by the previous government.

Members of the CRG worked hard to get everything ready for the new organisation. We are profoundly disappointed that the funds are not available for establishment of the new company.

The reality is that if we want our vision to come to life, we can't let it die.

People with a lived experience of mental health issues need to (re)build the case for a national organisation. We need to be utterly clear about the reasons that it MUST exist. We need to create the compelling argument for what it, alone, can do. When we are asked what value our organisation brings, we need to be able to explain that clearly to people who don't know much about mental health.

We need to create an army of 'peaceful warriors' who are capable of moving quickly to capitalise on an opportunity to launch our organisation. Many of us know the story of Rosa Parks who acted spontaneously by refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus. Fewer of us know that she was part of a larger organisation that was setting the scene for change. We can't let this setback destroy the army. It must keep building, and looking for the chance to act.

We need to look for the opportunity to act.

Perhaps that is a small-scale start using crowd-funding. We might face a future in which we alone can do it, though we won't do it alone (to use a phrase from 12-step programs).

Perhaps we can use the uncertainty over mental health funding and the debate that should occur about the future to embed our case.

Perhaps we need to maintain the momentum of the discussion amongst the federal opposition and cross-benches.

I desperately wish I had a clear and indisputable plan. Unfortunately, I don't.

I can only ask you to continue to be involved, and to consider being more vocal and more involved.

We will find a way.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the commitment of the project team at Mental Health Australia.

I wish you well. I hope I hear your voices.

Regards

Ian

Best wishes.

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