

## SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATIONS

The Supportive Workplace Forums brought together employers, peak bodies and business groups, Job Network and DEA providers, mental health service providers, consumers and government representatives. Included with this appendix is a list of attendees at each forum.

Total Attendance      Melbourne Forum: 58  
                                  Sydney Forum: 54

### Mental Health Presentations

A number of presentations were given to participants, aimed at increasing an awareness of:

- mental health issues
- current treatment practices and efficacy
- barriers faced by consumers in obtaining and maintaining work
- services available for people with mental illness
- how to better manage mental illness in the workplace
- services available to support job network and employment service providers and employers

Presenters included:

- Consumer Perspective - Ingrid Ozols
- Carer Perspective - Keith Wilson, Carers Australia
- Dept of Employment and Workplace Relations - Barry Sandison
- Awareness of Mental Illness Issues
  - Prof Pat McGorry, Orygen
  - Prof Ian Hickie, Brain and Mind Research Institute
- Mental Health Provider Perspectives
  - Barbara Hocking, SANE Australia
  - Nic Bolto, Ostara
  - Nicole Highet, *beyondblue*

Participants were asked to rate the whether the presentations increased their awareness of various mental health issues, where 5 = a great deal; 1 = minimal.

- mental health issues
 

1	14%
2	7%
3	36%
4	36%
5	7%
- current treatment practices and efficacy
 

1	14%
2	25%
3	21%
4	29%
5	11%

- barriers faced by consumers in obtaining and maintaining work
  - 1 11%
  - 2 4%
  - 3 39%
  - 4 32%
  - 5 14%
- services available for people with mental illness
  - 1 7%
  - 2 4%
  - 3 42%
  - 4 29%
  - 5 18%
- how to better manage mental illness in the workplace
  - 1 4%
  - 2 4%
  - 3 50%
  - 4 35%
  - 5 7%
- services available to support job network and employment service providers and employers
  - 1 7%
  - 2 4%
  - 3 35%
  - 4 50%
  - 5 4%

It should be noted that many attendees had prior knowledge of mental health issues and services available; others came to the forum with very little background.

#### Comments

- *The value of information presented was excellent/good*
- *Perspective of business (small and medium) could have been greater*
- *Attendees (particularly employers) with minimal contact or experience in this area reported a 'steep learning curve' resulting from the forum*
- *Attendees who already had some awareness of these issues, were pleased to share their experience and reinforce*
- *The range and depth of speakers and real life examples were very helpful*
- *Attendees would have enjoyed a stronger emphasis on employer representation*

#### **Industry Presentations**

Informative presentations from large and small employers illustrated the use of strategies in recruiting, supporting and maintaining people with a mental illness.

Industry presentations aimed to provide practical ideas/solutions for recruiting people with a mental illness. Presenters included:

- Telstra Care - Simone Adamczyk
- Ruth Oakden/Bryan Ambrosius, Toll Holdings
- Paul Fyfe, ATO
- Subway – Sue Hughes
- JOB futures – Deenie Adams

Comments

- *All fantastic – practical, inspiring*
- *Workplace support for managers – tools eg Telstra*
- *Yes, they made a good business case*
- *Stimulated thought – would like to learn about long term outcomes of Telstra program*
- *Yes, very much so – I'm going to approach Telstra and Subway to discuss potential employment avenues for our clients*
- *Telstra and Subway offered great employer insight and perspective*
- *Telstra resources excellent*
- *Subway yes; the others were merely what we have to sell and how we sell it*
- *Support and understanding; be empathetic*
- *Acquired information on how to go about recruiting in crews of people with disability*
- *Subway presentation was practical and from small business perspective*
- *Less than that? More about the barriers to be overcome in employing people and what works for staff and management education*
- *Further research required and will need to train management in better understanding*

Industry presenters provided examples of ways to improve workplace practices for dealing with the episodic nature of mental health problems.

Comments

- *Intranet support would be useful; documents (ie SANE booklet very useful)*
- *Excellent examples provided - very much so*
- *Principles well covered – practicalities less so*
- *Provided examples, but would like, more support, linkages with agencies*
- *Could have provided more examples*
- *Identified episodic nature of mental illness, however there are more issues to explore*
- *Education at all levels of is required*

Industry presentations showcased successful strategies to recruit and retain people with a disability.

Comments

- *Some excellent strategies and examples provided*
- *Subway, Toll Holdings and Telstra provided very good examples*
- *Gave examples of resources that could be used*
- *Showcased how to provide various levels of support*
- *Definitely, very good examples*
- *Showcase and strategies could have been expanded on*
- *The industry presentations were a start in showcasing strategies, but the workshops enabled participants to come up with practical ideas/solutions*
- *Yes, support services are available*
- *Information on retention of employees was good, but more information and strategies on recruiting needed*

**Workgroups**

Participants engaged in facilitated workgroups, and each asked to discuss various issues. Attendees actively participated in the group discussions, shared experiences, learnt from each other and aimed to find solutions to the various issues.

Overall, participants enjoyed the opportunity for dialogue and rated the workgroup discussions as “excellent/good”.

Comments

*Participants reported they would have liked to have discussed:*

- *An Employer Demand Action Plan*
- *Cost implications*
- *How to provide ongoing maintenance to workers with mental health issues*

*Participants would like to see:*

- *Sessions for employers/employer groups*
- *An ongoing process of communication*
- *More employers present at the forum*

**Additional Participant Comments**

Participants were invited to comment on any ways in which they might see improved linkages developing between the mental health services, job network and DEA employment services providers and employers?

Comments

- *Through the JAN system with local officers to directly approach employers – with the right support and incentives*
- *More employer information sessions*
- *Communication – as per feedback from discussion groups*
- *Information needs to be an easily accessible resource*
- *Local regular meetings*
- *Personal (contact) is best*
- *Well done MHCA; a great forum, very useful*
- *Encourage local networks/forums and facilitate to feed into larger state/national networks*
- *More time to develop linkages*
- *Employment services pressured with placement and support*
- *Incentives need to be built into the system, ie star ratings etc*
- *At the moment it's based on finding a good individual contact in each*
- *Yes, facilitated by DEWR – there is a need to better facilitate pathways between the programs and ensure services are encouraged to ensure clients are with the best service*
- *More meetings and opportunities to learn about each other's work*
- *I didn't see any state mental health reps – we need to engage them in this ongoing dialogue!*
- *Create a national website and chat room*
- *Inviting reps from professional member bodies*

**Suggested Actions Resulting from Forums**

Participants were asked to comment on any further action they would like as a result of the forums.

Comments

- *Focus on what assistance can be provided to enable more employers to employ people with a mental illness and retain them in ongoing employment*
- *More employer information sessions*
- *Develop incentive systems for employers*
- *More similar forums with strategies to influence policy makers*
- *Copy of overheads*

- *Copy of workgroup write-ups*
- *Circulation of presentations and outcomes to all participants*
- *Information from workgroups to be utilised – put together as discussion paper, etc*
- *Some kind of national campaign aimed at attracting employers to employ people with disabilities*
- *Follow up on use of information from workgroups*
- *Improved case study sharing of employment and education studies*
- *Better liaison between speakers to ensure less overlap*
- *Brief feedback from DEWR and MHCA – what do they see as outcome and next actions?*
- *A national marketing campaign*
- *Instigate presentation to AHRI NSW recruitment and retention members*
- *Information about participants to foster networking*

### **Recommendations for Future Forums**

Participants were invited to provide recommendations if future forums were to take place.

#### Comments

- *The forum was inspiring, not just from a recruiting background - I found that it gave me things to think about in my general day to day life.*
- *Invite CRS and Centrelink representatives*
- *Perhaps a little less academic and more practical*
- *Present to the “coal face” staff from organisations*
- *Information sessions for industry groups*
- *Industry specific employer forums targeted at employers as an audience in providers (all kinds) giving presentations, networking etc*
- *Invite state health ministers so as they can see how much mental health teamwork is being picked up by employment services*
- *Suggest industry presentations follow client and carer to put the specialist information into perspective*
- *My perspectives will be different from others – different starting point – mainly employer agency staff here and good for me to learn from them*
- *An employer panel discussing how they hired people with a mental illness*
- *Industry/profession based forums*