

Metro South Addiction and Mental Health Services

Deafness and Mental Health Statewide Consultation Service newsletter

Summer edition 2014

Address: 519 Kessels Road, Macgregor, Qld, 4121

Phone: 07 3167 8430 **TTY:** 07 3167 8488 **Mobile:** 0419 023 883 **Fax:** 07 3167 8377

Web: www.health.qld.gov.au/metrosouthmentalhealth/deafness

Welcome to the latest edition of the Deafness and Mental Health State wide Consultation Service newsletter. We are proud to announce our **10 year anniversary** ...

Happy 10th Anniversary DMHS!!

Ten years ago this service was born, following a research project 1998 and a Queensland Health Report in 2001 which stated that deaf people had little or no access to mental health services in Queensland that were appropriate or equitable.

The PA Hospital began services in November 2004 with a tiny team. Whilst staff and service goals have changed over the years due to funding challenges and organisational changes etc, we have remained a resilient and strong 'boutique' service.

The service once saw a 'drop in' crowd of deaf consumers looking for help, and now our consumers are other staff contacting us from Metro South to around the state - looking for support and resources in relation to their deaf or hard of hearing consumers.

We focus and build on the strengths that health professionals already have when



working with their deaf consumers, and help build on these skills so that the consumer, family, and carer, can get the best service possible in their own area and community.

Healthy Deaf Minds Workshop

The Deafness and Mental Health team in conjunction with Deaf Children Australia hosted a full day workshop in November, featuring Dr Brendan Monteiro, a Forensic Psychiatrist specialising in deafness and mental health in the United Kingdom. More than 70 people attended, coming from around Australia and New Zealand. The workshop was interpreted, and fully captioned in real time.



Dr Frances Dark, facilitating a panel discussion in the Russell Strong Auditorium.

An expert panel was set up in the afternoon, to discuss current trends and issues in relation to deafness and mental health in forensic and mental health scenarios. Ramon Rallah (PAH Indigenous Mental Health Coordinator) and Liza Clews (Manager for

Community Engagement and Development - Deaf Services Qld) gave insight into the unique cultural challenges for consumers accessing services including those in regional and remote communities. Dr Velimir Kovacevic (Clinical Director – Court liaison Services) and Dr Monteiro concurred on the need for further awareness in the court and forensic sector in relation to the importance of communication and how it affects the course of justice.

Mark Cave (Program Support Officer/ Professional Interpreter – DMHS) and Andrew Green (Community Development officer Deaf Services Qld), discussed the long term effects of Deafness on Mental Health and challenges for consumers and staff in forensic services, as well as the long term commitment required from multidisciplinary teams. Lynda Bergstrom (Case Manager – ‘Sign for Work’), discussed the importance of secure and meaningful employment in relation to wellness and recovery.

Outcomes of the event include a genuine pledge to form a National reference group.



Left to Right: Margherita Riccioni, Damian Lacey, Rebecca Reedman, Dianne Briffa, Brendan Monteiro, Frances Dark, Mark Cave and Jennifer D’Ath

Community education

The Deafness and Mental Health team work with community groups and the non-government sector to provide education sessions about mental health and wellbeing for Deaf and hard of hearing community groups.

If your community group is interested in accessing education about mental health and wellbeing, please contact the Deafness and Mental Health Service.

Contact the team by Skype

The Deafness and Mental Health team can now be contacted by Skype. This means deaf people who use Auslan can now contact the team directly using Auslan.

Traditionally, deaf people who use Auslan to communicate have had to rely on English text-based methods such as email, SMS and TTY to communicate. However Skype allows for video – based communication, making communicating in Auslan possible.

This is an important step in providing equitable access to this traditionally underserved community.

The team’s Skype names are:

Dianne Briffa – **di.dmhs**
Rebecca Reedman – **bec.dmhs**
Jennifer D’Ath – **jennifer.dmhs**
Mark Cave – **mark.dmhs**

Please note that all members of the team are part-time. Staff availability will be visible once logged into Skype.

Video conference equipment upgrade

We are excited to announce a well overdue equipment upgrade to our video conferencing equipment. The upgrade will see an improvement in the quality of visual communication, making consultations clearer for consumers and professionals working with the team.

The Deafness and Mental Health statewide consultation service is working closely with PAH Telehealth to promote and encourage consumer access to mental health services utilising video conferencing options, especially in regional and remote areas. We will continue to develop materials for workshops and presentations to be delivered around Queensland with support from PAH Telehealth services.

CICADA celebrate 25 years

CICADA (Cochlear Implant Club & Advisory Association) Queensland celebrated 25 years at the Shore Restaurant Southbank on Saturday 30th August. Di Briffa, along with a co-presenter, were guest speakers and presented some results of the research project that assessed the social and emotional needs of people with post lingual hearing loss.

Some issues identified included various communication issues, anxiety, depression and isolation, and that little support seemed to be provided through health services for social and emotional wellbeing.

One very noticeable theme that came out of this project was that the majority of participants showed great resilience and another was how important the peer support groups such as CICADA, Better Hearing Australia and the Logan Support group for hearing impaired people were in helping individuals and couples who had post lingual hearing loss.

Another significant theme was that education and awareness about hearing loss was vital.

SAFE Programme

The Deafness and Mental Health Service is now able to provide access for Queensland mental health services staff to an innovative online program for Deaf children.

The SAFE Programme supports the personal safety skills training of deaf children / youth through a ground breaking web-based resource which includes:

- understanding and recognising abuse and other ways they could come to harm
- keeping themselves safe, or telling someone who can help to keep them safe
- enabling them to make better informed choices about their lives
- encouraging them to support each other and strengthening their identity, self-confidence and self-esteem
- empowering them to communicate their thoughts, wishes and feelings
- enabling them to explore and understand their life experiences.

For more information about the SAFE Programme, visit www.safedeafkids.org.au

If you work with deaf consumers who you feel will benefit from this program, please contact Deafness_MHS@health.qld.gov.au to express your interest in gaining access to this valuable program.

