From the Director

Welcome to the Summer edition of the WA Centre for Mental Health Policy Research newsletter, which gives a snapshot of some of our research activities over the past months. This year we have continued to conduct service evaluations for stakeholders, a major project being the Interim Evaluation of the Statewide Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Services (SSAMHS) for the Mental Health Commission. We are also providing evaluation support to the project team delivering the Crisis Awareness Plan (CAP) Pilot Project, which is a trial of joint crisis planning with consumers and carers across four mental health services across WA.

Through a Churchill Fellowship I was able to visit the UK, Ireland and Europe to investigate personalised approaches in mental health service delivery, in particular the use of personal health budgets for consumers. I was fortunate to meet with many inspiring service providers involved in the shift in these countries toward greater power and choice for consumers in their recovery journey. A copy of the final report is available at: www.churchilltrust.com.au/site_media/fellows/2011_Williams_Theresa.pdf

Theresa Williams
Director

Interim Evaluation of the Statewide Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Services

The Centre has undertaken an Interim Evaluation of the Statewide Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Services (SSAMHS) for the Mental Health Commission. The purpose of the Interim Evaluation is to support the Mental Health Commission’s business case for further funding of the program, and to provide feedback to key stakeholders about how the program is operating.

In July Dr Geoff Smith and Research Officer Anita Lumbus travelled to the Goldfields, Great Southern and Pilbara regions to speak with SSAMHS staff, other public mental health workers and external agencies. Interviews and focus groups were held with staff from the metropolitan Specialist Aboriginal Mental Health Service (SAMHS) as well as public mental health clinicians who had accessed the metropolitan service. An online Statewide survey was also developed for SSAMHS staff. The research team put forward a submission for the Mental Health Commission’s business case in July. The final report was recently completed and submitted to the Mental Health Commission.

SSAMHS is a specialised service which aims to support Aboriginal people in accessing mainstream mental health services and increase the capacity of mental health services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people. Over $20 million has been committed to SSAMHS over four years as part of the ‘Closing the Gap’ initiative, with current funding to end in December 2013.
Overseas field research on personalisation in mental health

From April to June 2012 Adjunct Associate Professor Theresa Williams visited the UK, Ireland and Europe where she met with government agencies, NGOs and consumers and carers about the use of self-directed support for people with a mental illness.

Self-directed support is a personalised approach to mental health, where consumers have greater control and independence through a personal health budget, enabling them to choose their support needs.

Theresa Williams was granted a Churchill Fellowship to conduct her research. The countries she visited were at different stages of introducing the use of personal health budgets and she interviewed dozens of providers and consumers to learn about the strengths of the approach and some of the implementation issues.

The study tour has been beneficial in considering how self-directed support can be translated to fit within the Australian mental health context. Theresa is already putting what she has learned into practice as a member of the Expert Panel for the Individualised Community Living strategy where 100 people with a severe and persistent mental illness are assisted to transition from hospital inpatient settings to living in the community.

Crisis Awareness Plan Pilot Project

The Crisis Awareness Plan (CAP) Pilot Project is a twelve month project funded by the Mental Health Commission to trial joint crisis planning in four mental health services: Denmark/Albany, Broome, Rockingham and Swan.

The pilot aims to promote consumer centred care through collaboration between consumers, carers, mental health services, non-government organisations and GPs to develop consumer owned and managed shared crisis plans. The CAP is written in the consumer’s owned language and the process of developing the CAP is considered as important as the plan itself.

Anita Lumbus and Theresa Williams from the Centre are working together with the CAP project implementers, Dr Sandy Tait and Fiona McDonald to evaluate the pilot, with input also from the project Steering Committee. For the Evaluation the team is holding focus groups with the different stakeholder groups at the sites as well as an online survey for public mental health staff.

The results from the pilot and recommendations will be presented in a final report to key stakeholders in early 2013.

Research Officer Anita Lumbus and Senior Clinical Planning Officer Fiona McDonald at Denmark Hospital, where they held feedback sessions about the CAPs with Denmark GPs, consumers and carers.

WA Centre for Mental Health Policy Research

Graylands Hospital

Brockway Road

Mt Claremont WA 6010

Ph: (08) 9347 6842

Email: graylandsmedresearch@health.wa.gov.au