



**Private Mental Health  
Consumer Carer Network (Australia)**

*engage, empower, enable choice in private mental health*

Dr. Leanne Craze  
Craze Lateral Solutions Pty. Ltd.  
PO Box 314,  
BUNGENDORE NSW 2621

Dear Leanne,

**Summary**  
**Scoping Study to Inform the Establishment of a New Peak National Mental Health  
Consumer Organisation. January 2010**

The Network wishes to provide a response to the above paper.

We agree that the new organisation focus must be on systems change, human rights, lobbying of behalf of consumers and special interest groups and service development.

We believe one of the ways to do this is to have a good working relationship with existing organisations such as our Network. It is articulated within the document the need of the new organisation to assist with the development of consumer organisations, but as the Network has been in existence since 2002 and well beyond the development stage, we would hope to have a good and direct relationship.

- 1) *Develop strategies as to how the new organisation will effectively liaise with existing organisation, especially other national peak entities.*

We agree with your summary in regard to most other areas of the Summary. I think managing expectations will be a prime concern and a process as to how this might be bedded down should be developed.

- 2) *Development of strategy to address initial expectations.*

In terms of the organisational framework in particular the Chair and members of the Board, all should demonstrate experience as a mental health consumer, past or present. Having said that, it is clear to us, that expertise in organisational management including financial, structural, organisational, and external networks should also a clear requisite.

As the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) would report to and be directed by the Board, we do not feel that the 'lived experience' of mental illness is a requirement, rather the ability to work within a mental health consumer organisation. We would want that incumbent to demonstrate leadership and direction in promoting the engagement of consumers. We would also expect that the CEO has the responsibility for progressing the Board's agenda.

We would also want the incumbent to promote a culture and practice for consumer participation and engagement within the new organisation, fostering a positive and construct team environment which encourages ownership and responsibility. This should be achieved through effective management and support for the new organisation's position as the mental health sector's consumer peak body.

- 3) *The CEO need not have the lived experience as a mental health consumer.*
- 4) *The CEO will have expertise in promote a culture and practice for consumer participation and engagement within the new organisation, fostering a positive and construct team environment which encourages ownership and responsibility.*

The one thing that the Network feels very strongly about and differs from the Summary Paper, is the position of Chair. It is our view the Chair must be appointed as an **Independent** Chair.

Throughout the national consultations, the view that the Chair should be appointed as **Independent** has been articulated by consumers. The view of the Network is that we must hear the national consumer voice and strongly believe that this should be the position for the new consumer peak body. Little reference is made within the Summary paper to the Chair and this is to the *Inaugural* Chair. In past papers and consultations, **Independent** has been articulated and we do not think, given the overwhelming agreement from consumers around Australia, that this should be altered.

Further, it is our view that to ensure the most appropriate individual is appointed to this position, an advertisement be placed in all national and leading state and territory papers. Any other possible way of recruiting the Independent Chair would in the Network's view be both counter-productive and may not recruit the best individual. This could leave the new consumer organisation open to the risk of things such as infighting, popular individual rather than expert, lobbying by particular organisations or individuals, all the things that we would want to avoid.

The Independent Chair will be the key in our view to the acceptance of the new consumer organisation. He/She will be the spokesperson, public face and liaison for external partnerships with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing firstly and other Australian/State Government Departments at all levels as well as the community. He/She will be publicly profiling the organisation, building key relationships to ensure acceptability and sustainability of the national consumer voice.

We would expect the Independent Chair to have:

- Demonstrated record of leadership in consumer organisations;
- Proven management skills;
- Understanding of mental health issues which affect mental health consumers from a lived experience;

- Ability to undertake oversight of the organisations finances within tight financial constraints;
- Experience in public speaking and as an organisational representative of high level committees and working groups;
- Comprehensive understanding of policy, legislation and associated frameworks which affect the delivery of services within the mental health sector;
- Comprehensive understanding of the National Mental Health Strategy; and
- An ability to maintain and engage partnerships with key stakeholders, government and the broader mental health system.

5) *The Chair of the new Organisation must be appointed as the Independent Chair* 6)

*The position must be advertised nationally in the Australian print media.*

Strong consideration must also be given to advertising within the consumer/consumer organisational members of the new peak body for ALL board positions. This would allow for the most appropriate individuals to apply/nominate for these positions opening up the opportunities beyond the suggested nomination process.

7) *ALL board positions must be advertised through the consumer/consumer organisational members of the new peak.*

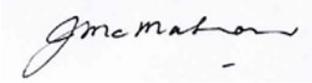
Again, the Network wishes to re-iterate our support for that outlined within the Summary paper but ask that you strongly consider the following Recommendations.

- 1) **Develop strategies as to how the new organisation will effectively liaise with existing organisation, especially other national peak entities.**
- 2) **Development of strategy to address initial expectations.**
- 3) **The CEO need not have the lived experience as a mental health consumer.**
- 4) **The CEO will have expertise in promote a culture and practice for consumer Participation and engagement within the new organisation, fostering a positive and construct team environment which encourages ownership and responsibility.**
- 5) **The Chair of the new Organisation must be appointed as the *Independent Chair*.**
- 6) **The position of Chair must be advertised nationally in the Australian print media.**
- 7) **All board positions must be advertised through the consumer/consumer organisational members of the new peak.**

This is an exciting time for mental health consumers and the Network looks forward to working closely with the new consumer peak organisation once it is established.

Thank you for the opportunity of providing this feedback.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J McMahon', is centered below the text 'Yours faithfully,'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ms. Janne McMahon OAM  
Independent Chair  
24 February, 2010