



# 2013-2014 Annual Report

Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia





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# About Us



## Who We Are

Mental Health Carers ARAFMI Australia comprises mental health carer organisations across Australia.

MHCAA member agencies are the leading mental health carer support agencies across Australia. They provide specialist mental health support to families, carers and their friends. Support includes: linking people to other carers who can offer face to face peer support, education services with other carers, and advocacy services which assist individuals to identify and find solutions to their challenges.

## Our Vision

People with a mental illness, and their families and carers, will be understood, respected and provided with a level of treatment and support which provides them with the opportunity to be included in their community.

## Our Mission

Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia's mission is to represent at national level the interests of ARAFMI groups throughout Australia and the needs and concerns of their constituency – families and others voluntarily caring for people with mental illness.



# President's Report



The past year has involved significant change for MHCAA and its membership.

After 37 years, Arafemi Victoria merged with Mind Australia in December 2013 as a result of the Victorian Government 'recommissioning' process. This policy has focussed on defunding small community based mental health support organisations, to establish, hopefully, more efficient larger business models. It has not been client focussed, and as a result approximately half of all people being supported with mental illness in the community have needed to change their support providers and re-establish new relationships with

different support workers! As expected, carers of people with a mental illness will play a major role in ensuring that ongoing support is provided where needed.

The merger between Mind Australia and Arafemi Victoria has been very successful because of the similar values and culture within both organisations. It has provided a stronger platform for both funded and unfunded family and carer support to be implemented into the future. We welcome Mind Australia to the MHCAA group of services. In addition, as Mind is a major service provider in South Australia we have been able to broaden our membership to include that state.

This transition has also provided MHCAA with a stronger and broader platform upon which to continue and increase its national advocacy efforts. This is no more evident than in the creation of a new website, [www.ournationalvoice.com](http://www.ournationalvoice.com). Our National Voice is a new initiative which is a place where carers and families can tell their stories in a safe and supervised environment. The sharing on this website reflects our strong commitment of bringing carer grassroots experience to the national arena.

The Arafmi heritage is stronger than ever. Carers are not alone. They are provided with mutual support, opportunities for self-growth, and recovery from their own lived experience of assisting a family member to live in the community through contact with our websites and member organisations.

MHCAA's main objective for the forthcoming years is to ensure that we influence future national mental health policy so that it is responsive to our family members who may be recovering from an episode of mental illness but are still in need of ongoing support, and their carers.

I wish to acknowledge the support and role played by many members of the state and territory organisations who have contributed much over the last year to our ongoing success.

A special thanks to Jane, and best wishes to her as she takes four months leave without pay to do a mental health internship with the World Health Organization in Geneva.

Warren Jenkins  
President



# Executive Officer's Report



This year was a transition year for Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia (MHCAA). We have moved from looking inward, to moving forward as a group of united organisations pushing for systematic change for mental health carers.

## Successes for 2013-14

This financial year has seen the beginning of a number of major projects for MHCAA. Through all the below activities, we continue to provide a national voice for each of our mental health carer-run state or territory-based member organisations, and for all mental health carers who receive support from our member organisations. Projects have included:

### **Our National Voice**

This year we launched 'Our National Voice', a website devoted to telling the personal stories of mental health carers. Our National Voice raises awareness of the experience of caring for a loved one with a mental illness.

The impact of mental illness on families can be quite devastating. People often feel like they are the very first person on earth that this has happened to; sharing carer stories can help people realise they are not alone and make them more willing to reach out for help.

This website collates the many stories about the lived experience of carers, who will now be able to express their points of view nationally and not feel isolated, unheard or misunderstood.

Please visit [www.ournationalvoice.com](http://www.ournationalvoice.com) to read the personal stories.

### **SANE's Online Forum Project**

The Carers Forum is an Australian service for families, friends and other carers of someone living with mental illness. It provides a safe, anonymous online space for carers to share stories and help each other. All our member organisations are participating in the project. Local communities and carers will be able to access the national online forum via member websites.

### **Mental Health Commission's 2013 Report Card**

This year we collected, wrote and filmed carer's personal stories for the National Mental Health Commission's Report Card of 2013. An example is provided on page 9.

### **Advocacy and Consultation Program: Grass Roots to National Voice**

This year we also broadened our advocacy and consultation program entitled 'Grass Roots to National Voice'. We have undertaken submissions, publications and media activity, informing government and the public of the needs of mental health carers. In particular, we have provided numerous submissions and representation to Government on mental health carer issues in relation to the NDIS.



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## Members

We welcome Mind Australia as a new member of MHCAA. Mind Australia brings a wealth of knowledge from both South Australia and Victoria. Mind has generously taken on the auspice of MHCAA. We look forward to continuing to work with them into the future.

In 2013 we farewelled Arafemi Victoria as a member. Arafemi Victoria merged with Mind in late 2013. We believe Mind Australia upholds Arafemi's strong ethos for providing quality carer supports and services.

## With Thanks

The collective membership base uniquely positions our national organisation to be able to hear directly from mental health carers throughout Australia and builds our strength nationally. As such, our members are absolutely vital to the continuing viability of our organisations. Thank-you to our members and partners who have worked with us this year.

## Priorities for the future

2014-15 will see the MHCAA continue to expand our contribution to national mental health policy, service development and reform. I look forward to working with our members and friends in the coming year.

Jane Henty  
Executive Officer



# Committee Members



## Warren Jenkins, President

Mr Jenkins was the previous Executive Officer of MHCAA and Executive Director of Arafemi Victoria. He has spent over 25 years in the management of mental health and disability services. Warren has been a mental health carer for 20 years, and represents the Mind Australia Board.



## Tony Fowke, Vice President

Tony has been a mental health carer advocate for some thirty years having experienced mental illness within his family. In 2003 Tony was appointed as a member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for service as an advocate for the advancement of mental health services in Australia.



## Kristine Havron, Secretary

Kristine Havron is the President of Arafmi NSW and a member of Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia. She has been a mental health carer for 13 years.



## Jean Platts, Treasurer

Jean has been a Board member of Arafmi Queensland since 1999 and held positions of Treasurer and Vice President. She has previously been the Qld Carer representative on the National Mental Health Consumer & Carer Forum and has held the positions of Deputy Co Chair and Ordinary Executive member.



## Bronwyn Russell

Bronwyn has degrees in Psychology and Biology, and a Graduate Diploma in Management. She is presently the Director of Engineers Australia Northern Division, President of Mental Illness Fellowship NT and an ordinary member of MHCAA.



## Kate Shipway

Kate is President of Mental Health Carers Tasmania. Kate has been involved as a mental health carer and advocate for over 10 years. She represented Tasmania on the National Mental Health Consumer and Carers Forum from 2005-09 and represented ARAFMI Tasmania on the Mental Health Council of Tasmania from 2003-2011.





# Our National Voice



The following personal story is a contribution to our 'Our National Voice Website'. Our National Voice raises the voice of carers through personal story telling. Please visit [www.ournationalvoice.com](http://www.ournationalvoice.com)

## Melissa's Story WA

Since I was seven I have been caring for my mother, who has schizophrenia. This burden was a very heavy one, one that I didn't always understand. For a lot of my childhood I believed her delusions; I was terrified of everything and everyone. I would sleep hiding under my bed, just in case a bullet was shot through the window. We would push fridges and washing machines in front of doors to barricade us in. I was always scared expecting the horrible things mum would tell me about, things she had told me about in detail from a young age and that I had learnt to believe as truths.

I remember the very moment I took over from my mum. She had awoken me in the middle of the night, as was a regular occurrence, to run through the streets trying to flee from the "spies" that were after us. We would leave everything in the house and just disappear with the clothes on our backs. It was winter and I was grumpy as we darted from tree to tree, and from doorway to doorway trying to keep off the paths that were lit by the streetlights. Soon I forgot my frustrations and enjoyed this game – as I usually did. I presume we were heading to the local regional bus-port or airport, as was usually the way. Then while we were cowed hidden in the doorway of a building in the local shopping area mum froze. In front of us a street sweeper went by and a homeless man was rummaging the bin under the streetlight. "They have found us" – Mum said. I looked back at the scene ahead of me. I knew that "they" were the spies, the aliens, the robots, and anyone else who intended us harm. "I can't keep you safe", she continued, her whole body slumping with sadness and defeat.

I remember thinking "we are not in danger! These people do not want to hurt us!" I took mum's hand and lead her home to comfort her. That was the moment, when I was seven, that I took over.

As I grew older I started to take more and more control of our lives, managing everything from my school enrolments and medical forms to what we were to eat and where we lived. Ultimately this burden took its toll on every part of my life including my relationship with my mum. I developed





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Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depression and began disassociating by the time I was 13, only to become suicidal by the time I was 15. I tried repeatedly to get help from my school, family, authorities and the mental health teams but was turned away. Only 5 minutes out of my plan to end my life I realised my life was the only thing I had that could only be damaged by my situation if I let it.... so over an 8 month period I focused on how to win back everything I had lost.

I have been working on this ever since. By far the most beneficial improvement was counselling, which I got from Arafmi WA. I finally found a place that believed me! Through counselling I developed self-worth again. I finally started to admit that I was angry at a lot of people and situations in my past. I also started to set boundaries with my mother, friends and family.

So now I am a happy and alive young woman. I am studying psychology at university and I work full time in the field of mental health. Working on issues relating to being a COPMI carer is something I may always have to work on however, I am focusing on who I am, not what the illness has done to me. And my mum and I are working on a relationship separate to that which is caused by her illness. I still feel like her parent but that is only one part of my life now.



# Contribution to the National Mental Health Commission's Report Card



In 2013 Mental health Carers Arafmi Australia collected personal stories for the National Mental Health Commission's Annual Report Card. The following is a personal story from the Secretary of Mental Health Carers Arafmi Australia, Kristine (pictured left).

*Photo source: National Mental Health Commission*

## Kristine, New South Wales- Supporting a brother

*My brother was a son, a husband, a father, a grandfather, and a pastor. This story is about how his life ended tragically after many, many years of service providers passing the buck and not assisting him for both his mental illness and his alcohol use.*

There were numerous occasions when he was admitted to hospital with physical injuries. Each time he was admitted we tried to get help for his mental health as well, but he was discharged on his word. He presented with the smell of alcohol on his clothes and was labelled a 'drunk'.

One day he attended court to answer a drink driving charge. He was drunk. The judge said he did not know what to do with him and decided to send him to prison. After prison he went to rehab to treat his alcohol abuse.

He passed out at the Rehab Centre and by the time the ambulance arrived he had recovered consciousness. The rehab would not allow him back if he was put on medication for his mental health.

When he arrived at the hospital the staff assessed him and asked him if he was a threat to himself. He said 'no' so they waited for a doctor.

He wanted to call his wife, using their phone because he had not brought any money with him from rehab, but they refused.

My brother had issues with alcohol his whole life and because of this he was denied services which could have helped him with his mental illness. He took his own life while at the hospital because he couldn't get the help he needed.

I believe service providers need to treat mental illness, physical health and drug and alcohol use together. Not separately.



# Our Members

Our members are long-standing providers of mental health services for consumers and carers. MHCAA would like to sincerely thank our members for their tireless support and commitment in 2013 -2014.

## **Mind Australia (Victoria & South Australia)**



## **Mental Health Carers Tasmania**



## **Mental Health Carers ARAFMI NSW Inc**



## **Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia NT**



## **Mental Health Carers Arafmi (WA) Inc**



## **Mental Health Carers Arafmi Queensland Inc.**





# Financial Statement

**Mental Health Carers Arafmi Aust Inc**  
P O Box 88/78 WILLIAM STREET  
WOOLLOMOOLOO  
NSW 2011

## **Balance Sheet**

**As of June 2014**

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<b>Assets</b>		
Current Assets		
Cash On Hand		
Bendigo Bank 136197381	\$61,160.94	
Total Cash On Hand	\$61,160.94	
Trade Debtors	\$320.00	
Total Current Assets	\$61,480.94	
Total Assets		\$61,480.94
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Current Liabilities		
Trade Creditors	\$215.74	
GST Liabilities		
GST Paid	-\$1,888.43	
Total GST Liabilities	-\$1,888.43	
Total Current Liabilities	-\$1,672.69	
Total Liabilities		-\$1,672.69
Net Assets		\$63,153.63
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained Earnings	\$21,157.15	
Current Year Earnings	\$41,996.48	
Total Equity		\$63,153.63



**Mental Health Carers Arafmi Aust Inc**  
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WOOLLOMOOLOO  
NSW 2011

**Profit & Loss Statement**

**July 2013 through June 2014**

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<b>Income</b>		
Membership Fees		\$80,997.00
Nat Project Funds		\$5,215.45
Bank Interest		\$507.00
Total Income		<u>\$86,719.45</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Accounting & Audit Fees		\$363.84
Bank Charges		\$55.00
Conference		\$93.39
Membership Fees		-\$19,695.34
Catering		\$332.45
Printing & Stationery		\$40.82
Website		\$226.36
Office Supplies		\$78.82
Telephone		\$229.26
Cab Charges		\$730.08
Car expenses		\$190.84
Parking		\$346.39
Consultancies		\$990.00
Travel & Accomodation		\$3,726.17
Employment Expenses		
Administration Cost	\$91.00	
Superannuation	\$864.12	
Wages & Salaries	\$55,718.21	
Workers' Com Insurance	\$244.99	
Teleconference cost	\$96.77	
Total Expenses		<u>\$44,722.97</u>
Operating Profit		<u>\$41,996.48</u>
Other Income		
Other Expenses		
Net Profit / (Loss)		<u>\$41,996.48</u>



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