



MHYF Vic Newsletter No. 85 September 2023

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MHYFVic Annual General Meeting 2023

Our Annual General Meeting this year was held on Thursday 24th August, at the Bleak House Hotel. The after-dinner speaker was Associate Professor Paul Robertson, Deputy Chief Psychiatrist, who spoke on the topic of **Transforming the Victorian Mental Health System for Child and Youth and their Families – Where are we up to in responding to the Royal Commission in the Victorian Mental Health System.**

The full scope of the presentation can be seen on the MHYFVic website. Commentary on one aspect of the presentation is included later in this newsletter. However, our leading item is the report by our President, Jo Grimwade.

MHYFVic President’s Report

Welcome everybody, especially our guest speaker, Dr Paul Robertson. In the twelve months since I last reported much has happened.

MHYF Vic is an organization committed to hearing the voices of consumers and of

professionals. At each of our forums, and in our newsletters, we try to present the range of professions that contribute to the delivery of quality mental health services for children and families. Tonight, we have a presentation on the implementation of the recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health Services (VRCMHS) for children, adolescents, and their families.

This year, we have continued to work to achieve more understanding of the needs for mental health services for children and families through a series of collaborations. The past two years have made collaborating difficult. Most of the activities have been reported in our newsletters, but we have been active within:

- Winston Rickards Memorial Oration
- Royal Commission implementation
- Indigenous Project Group (Koori Kids collaboration)
- Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australia collaboration
- Restructuring of MHYF Vic

The achievement of the year, as usual, was the annual Winston Rickards Memorial Oration. This year the speaker was the President of the World Association for Infant Mental Health (WAIMH), Professor Campbell Paul of the Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH).

Congratulations to the WRMO sub-committee for again finding a topic of great importance and a speaker of exceptional quality. Next year's presentation will move to another field of great interest to Winston Rickards: child psychotherapy.

Tonight, we will hear about the VRCMHS implementation progress for our consumers and for the field. We distinguish the AGM address from the WRMO by focussing on activities that improve service delivery. The WRMO is usually about ideas and contributions to the field.

Another collaboration of long duration has been with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Koori Kids program, with whom our Treasurer, Ms Kaye Geoghegan, was connected through her work in the 1990s. Dr Suzanne Dean has led the collaboration. The Indigenous Project Group has two main initiatives in train, namely, two-way discussions with indigenous child and adolescent workers about how to improve the cultural awareness of non-indigenous workers working with the young and their families; and, secondly, advocacy for greater resources for Aboriginal organizations in Victoria to expand child and youth mental health and well-being services for their communities.

Suzanne Dean has undertaken liaison for MHYF Vic with the Child Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Association of Australia to actively explore ways of enhancing the Victorian Government's Mental Health System reforms by enriched exposure to psychodynamic approaches to thinking and programs for children, youth, and families.

Interstate conversations have begun investigating usefulness of MHYF Vic becoming a national organization, given that no other national advocacy body yet exists in this space. Anybody who would like to see such nationwide representation is welcome to help

us with this project, especially if you have colleagues in other states and territories. How does MHYF Aus sound?

Complementary to this initiative is a process initiated by Dr Allan Mawdsley for MHYF Vic to become able to receive funding from charitable organizations. This will require the Committee to be restructured as a Board with Directors, to have some constitutional changes, and a new administrative structure which separates the role of Chairperson from the Chief Executive Officer. The new structure will help secure the financial position of MHYF Vic, but enable the setting up of MHYF Aus, Australia-wide. This is not a foregone process. We have given ourselves two years to explore the feasibility and implement the changes. This will be reported at the AGM in 2024

To increase the relevance and influence of MHYF Vic we have also begun a series of ongoing collaborative arrangements with other agencies (such as Orygen), advocacy groups (such as Mental Health Foundation of Australia), and professional associations (such as Speech Pathology) led by Allan Mawdsley. The aim is to enhance shared aspirations for change. Associated with this will be a regular Bulletin that reports on our shared activities to other members of our network. The fourth such Bulletin has been produced. Anybody who is a member of another group that wants to share our lobbying efforts are encouraged to join with us. The primary link between groups will be through a nominated MHYF Vic committee member who is linked with a specific person in the other group. Join us!

Disappointingly, we note that the planned a collaboration with Spectrum Borderline Personality Service to run an educational forum for child and adolescent mental health practitioners presented by Dr Jo Beatson and Dr Sathya Rao. The program had to be cancelled at late notice, for which we apologize. Yet we maintain our link with

Spectrum and hope to launch shared endeavours into the future.

The lobbying program will become a further facet of our ongoing tasks: newsletters, the website, and the Guide to Best Practice. Each of these activities have been under the stewardship of Allan Mawdsley. The newsletter has always matters of interest and contemporary activity, as well as reports of our activities.

Another project just getting underway is liaison with the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing (DFFH) over the training of child protection workers and the processes of response to matters of child protection. One meeting has already been held and this was productive.

The role of webmaster will continue with Ms Linda Purcell, and she has updated the website with great effect and utility. We believe we have made the website more appealing to younger people, but would like ongoing feedback from website users. We encourage those present tonight to take a look and provide feedback.

The Guide to Practice Atlas is the idea of Allan Mawdsley and the first draft has emerged. Parts of the Guide have already been reviewed and renewed. This is an ongoing task, and anybody can contribute by offering new topics or by updating entries. Our field expands and requires new input.

Administratively, we have had no changes; until tonight. We need a new child psychiatry representative and thank Dr Andrew Wake for his role this year. We hoped to enjoy an expanded collaboration with the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. We invite members of the meeting tonight to join us to pursue particular professional and service objectives. We particularly seek community members and consumer or carer members.

So, to finish: I wish to express my gratitude to the committee for the work of the year. Dr Dean and Dr Mawdsley are great contributors on all topics.

Ms Geoghegan in her roles of Treasurer and Membership Secretary, has been active and has contributed widely. She buys the cards and flowers when important people deserve celebration or condolences. Thanks Kaye.

Dr Cecelia Winkelman is much deserving of my thanks and the appreciation of all the Committee. She has undertaken the role of Secretary with energy, reliability, and timeliness for the past five years. She is an apology for tonight as she has grandmother duties in New York.

We remain grateful for the contribution of Dr Miriam Tisher, who is the most urgent correspondent on our various productions, especially with the updating of our Guide to Best Practice.

Once again, I thank our webmaster, Ms Linda Purcell. Behind the scenes we have had regular support from Ms Sarina Smale, Dr Celia Godfrey, Ms Jessica Zhao; thanks.

Another thank you is due to Allan Mawdsley: we continue the process of updating our principles and policies documents, such that they become springboards for action. Again this will be along and intense process, but I hope to report next year on action plans.

We are hopeful of more in person events in 2024.

Once more I invite participation of all at whatever level you can. We have been talking from time to time about recruitment and renewal of the committee, and planning for retirements. Join the committee as a member without portfolio! Please let us know of your interest.

Jo Grimwade, President, MHYF Vic

The Voice

A huge number of statutory bodies have a voice to Parliament, as do a huge number of lobbyists for organizations like the Employers Federation and the Council of Trade Unions, the AMA and RSL. In fact, we all have a voice through our submissions and petitions. Whether or not the Government takes any notice of these voices is a political decision for which it will be answerable via the ballot box.

The Voice proposed for aboriginal people in the forthcoming referendum will have no powers other than the public support it can generate by its pronouncements. This Voice will essentially be no different from that of other statutory bodies except that it could only be modified, not abolished, by Governments of the day. That is why it should be in the Constitution to protect its survival. For too long Australian Governments have failed to listen adequately to the indigenous people. This is the opportunity to make up for that unlevel playing field.

MHYFVic supports the proposed change. Vote YES.

News from Emerging Minds.

Reflecting on National Day of Action

Against Bullying and Violence

Friday, 18 August was National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, the theme for 2023 was 'growing connections', to help prevent bullying. The theme supports research findings that strong school community connectedness and social skills are protective factors in preventing and addressing bullying, and help enable positive, help-seeking behaviours in students.

We shared our practice paper, [Key considerations for practitioners responding to childhood bullying](#), which has been written to

provide you with knowledge on how to support children's disclosures of bullying involvement by providing supportive and curious responses. As a practitioner, you may see children who have either been experiencing or engaging in bullying behaviour and wonder about the best ways to support their mental health. This paper explores key issues and challenges to better respond to childhood bullying with the children you work with.

Check out our full library of resources on bullying including podcast episodes, webinars, online courses and more on Emerging Minds website.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

Not much is new for young peoples' mental health three years after the Royal Commission

The recent MHYFVic Annual General Meeting was fortunate to have had a presentation by Deputy Chief Psychiatrist, Dr Paul Robertson, outlining the changes for young people stemming from the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The full scope of the presentation can be viewed by downloading the pdf from our website. However, this commentary focuses on the particular issue of the "missing middle" for our future advocacy.

The government's regional specialist mental health programs are now called Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (AMHWS). AHMWS are the new CYMHS/ CAMHS. Dr Robertson gave the cautionary warning, "Infant, Child and Youth AMHWSs are developing plans that outline how they will reorganise themselves into the new age-based streams and expand their service offering. This reform is significant and will take time."

Not only time, but considerably more money and personnel. We are reassured, "DH is

working with services to ensure there are clear arrangements for delivering Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services in each area.” “Funding is being provided to allow AMHWSs to see more infants, children and young people, and ensure they receive the right amount of treatment care and support they need.” Two warning bells are ringing. One is the potential sidelining of children’s services as a minority issue overwhelmed by the needs of adult services. The other is the “missing middle”. It is difficult for minority groups like children to have their needs met. The warning bell here is that 22 adult AMHWS (and their Aged Care components), together with the augmented statewide services, also need funding competing with the 13 for young people.

The second warning bell is about the small start of the local mental health and wellbeing services intended to assist the “missing middle”. In the spectrum of mild, moderate and severe it has long been complained that whilst treatment services are usually available for the mild and severe cases it is difficult to access treatment for the missing middle (unless you have lots of money). Moderate degrees of mental disorders are too severe to respond to supportive measures but not severe enough to gain entry to specialist services. However, research shows that just as many adverse outcomes, including suicides, occur in this large group as in the smaller group of severe disorders. Historical focus on the most “at risk” clients fails to help the large number of moderate degrees of disorder. The recommended new stratum of ‘local mental health and wellbeing services’ is designed to address that problem.

The concern is that whilst 50 -60 of these are being planned for adult services, only three are planned for the Infant, Child and their

Families stream (plus relying on Headspace programs to cater for the Youth stream). Three, in contrast to 50-60, is absolutely inadequate. The three will be located at Brimbank/Melton, Southern Melbourne and Bendigo. They are to be welcomed, and we keenly await the evaluation of their benefit, but the need for them is already clearly documented. We know that statewide developments cannot all be achieved at once, but it is not too cynical to say that infants and children don’t vote, whereas adults do. Your comments would be welcome at admin@mhyfvic.org

OUR UPDATED WEBSITE

After much thought our website has been significantly revised to give casual visitors immediate information about what we do and what we stand for, whilst at the same time allowing members to go straight to specific sections such as Projects or Newsletters or Events, without having to navigate past reams of information.

Now that the main revision has been implemented we are working on tasks of development of Projects to give us the evidence base for our advocacy. There are quite a few items under development at the present time which are not yet reflected in the website but over the next few months we expect to see a burgeoning of activity.

Visit us on **mhyfvic.org**

MHYFVic Membership

Annual membership of MHYFVic is now due.

Our mission is to promote improvements in mental health for the young and their families, so you receive our newsletters and notices whether or not you are a paid-up member.

Membership subscriptions of \$50 per annum

enable the organisation to maintain its website, mailbox, telephone service and to undertake its administrative tasks. If you value the work that MHYFVic does, we need your financial as well as your ethical support.

Send cheques to MHYFVic, PO Box 206, Parkville, Vic 3052; or Transfer funds to MHYFVic, BSB: 033 090 Account: 315188; write your name in the Reference tab. In addition, please send a confirmatory email to admin@mhyfvic.org

2024 MHYF Vic Committee

- * President : Jo Grimwade
- * Vice- President: Allan Mawdsley
- * Secretary : Cecelia Winkelman
- * Treasurer/Memberships: Kaye Geoghegan
- * Projects Coordinator, Allan Mawdsley
- * WebMaster, Linda Purcell
- * Newsletter Editor, Allan Mawdsley
- * Youth Consumer Representative, vacant
- * Members without portfolio: Suzie Dean, Miriam Tisher, Celia Godfrey, Andrew Wake, Sarina Smale, Michelle Morris.