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**Newsletter**

12th February 2025

**What’s in this edition?**

Kaya and welcome to this edition of the CoMHWA newsletter!

We have just moved into the Nyoongar season of Bunuru, the hottest time of the year. Traditionally, this was the time people moved closer to the coast and rivers for cooling sea breezes. While we might not have the sea on our doorstep it is safe to say we have been enjoying the air-conditioning here at CoMHWA. We hope this newsletter finds you keeping cool and taking this hot season to rest.

In this edition of the CoMHWA newsletter you will find some amazing opportunities heading your way, with options to get involved in many of our projects starting this year, including our recently launched, co-designed, Peer Support Groups!

As always, if there is anything you would like included in a future newsletter please email us at admin@comhwa.org.au or call on 08 9258 8911.

Caitlin Hellewell

Communications Officer

**Message from CoMHWA**

**Welcome Rachael - CoMHWA’s new My Voice, My Rights, My Way Project Officer**

Rachael is a passionate mental health, disability and youth advocate who is joining CoMHWA as a Project Officer on the My Voice, My Rights, My Way team. She will be putting to use her creative side, creating a number of self-advocacy resources which aim to provide people experiencing mental health challenges with the skills, tools and self-efficacy they need to understand and protect their rights.

“I am so excited to be officially joining the CoMHWA team after having been heavily involved as a member. I am very connected within both the mental health and disability sectors – I sit on many advisory groups and panels (including with Richmond Wellbeing, Youth Focus, Headspace, The Kids' Institute, Young Minds Our Future, Australian Child and Youth Wellbeing Atlas,  Suicide Prevention Australia and more).

I have worked as a journalist with the ABC, published articles with Butterfly, Embrace, MIFA and The Y, with many more in the works. I also work in numerous volunteer roles such as Treasurer for Youth Disability Advocacy Network, and the founder of my own organisation, [Integrity Initiative](https://integrityinitiative.weebly.com/). My work at CoMHWA is an extension of my passion, dedication and determination to make my corner of the world a kinder, safer and more accommodating place to exist.” - *Rachael Burns*

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**NDIS participant survey to inform CoMHWA's feedback to NDIS Mandatory Registration consultation**

Consumers of Mental Health WA (CoMHWA) is seeking your responses as a participant accessing NDIS for psychosocial disability to guide us in giving feedback to the NDIS Commission’s consultations on Mandatory Registration of platform providers, Supported Independent Living (SIL) providers, and support coordination providers.

The proposed changes will mean registration will be required for all platform providers, and all services who provide SIL and support coordination. These changes will come into effect no sooner than July 2025. The NDIS Commission have released two consultation papers, including easy read versions. Prior to filling out this survey, it is a good idea to read those papers, which can be found on the NDIS Commission Website (ndiscomission.gov.au).

The survey is voluntary and confidential, and should take around 5-10 minutes of your time. You can skip most questions you do not want to answer. Your responses will be used in the development of a submission paper to be provided as feedback to the NDIS Commission, and will be published on CoMHWA’s website in mid-March.

**The survey will be open until 5pm AWST, Sunday 2nd of March 2025.**

If you would like to fill out the survey, please call CoMHWA on 9258 8911 and ask to speak with a member of the systemic advocacy team or email us at sysadvocacy@comhwa.org.au

We want to say thanks for the time you've taken to do this survey. We have five $50 gift cards to give out. Complete the survey for the chance to win!

A group of people sitting on the floor

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**Launch of  CoMHWA’s Listening Lounge Mental Health Peer Support Groups!**

After 6 months, 88 contributors and many co-design workshop hours later, we are now launching a new mental health Peer support group program, The Listening Lounge.

The Listening Lounge has been 100% co-designed by people with a lived experience of mental health challenges who come from a diverse range of ages, genders, sexualities and cultural backgrounds. They also came with many and varied levels of previous peer support group experience.

About the Listening Lounge

The Listening Lounge is a safe and supportive space where you can share your experiences, listen to and learn from others, and connect with peers who have a lived experience of mental health challenges themselves.

The Listening Lounge Mental Health Peer Support groups are for:

* Adults (aged 18+) who are currently struggling with their mental health OR
* Who identify as having a lived experience of mental health challenges

The Listening Lounge groups are **free,**weekly and co-facilitated by two trained Peer facilitators with lived experience.

What do we talk about in a group?

A Listening Lounge Peer Support group goes for 1.5-2 hours. It has a flexible structure that allows time for:

* Sharing a problem or issue that you may be struggling with
* Listening and learning from others
* Sharing wins/achievements
* Having a cup tea/coffee and chatting with fellow attendees after group
* A mental health discussion topic or activity
* Hearing about community events, supports, and services, plus much more.

We have two groups starting in of March 2025!

**Monday Morning Leederville Group**

**When:** Weekly on Mondays 10am-12pm from 10th March 2025

**Where:** Vincent Community Centre, Leederville

**Tuesday Evening Cloverdale Group**

**When:** Weekly on Tuesday 6pm to 9pm from 11th March 2025

**Where:**CoMWHA Office, Cloverdale

If you have any questions or want to sign up please email Laura McWhae: lmcwhae@comhwa.org.au or call 0413 251 383

**Listen. Advocate. Change.**

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| |  | | --- | | **Position Paper on the WA Government’s response to the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission (DRC)** | |
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In late August 2024, the WA government released its [response](https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/disability-royal-commission-wa-response) to the final report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (the DRC), almost one full year after the release of the report. In December 2024, the WA government released its [WA Disability Royal Commission Implementation Roadmap](https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-12/drc-implementation-roadmap_0.pdf) outlining its activities towards implementation of the 100 recommendations it accepted or accepted in principle or in part, development of positions on the 32 recommendations that are under consideration, and short-term priorities.

In the attached briefing paper for our members, we explain our positions on the WA government response, and the release of the Implementation Roadmap. Our positions are informed by issues we hear about most often from our members, and we feel it is vital that the WA government hears and acts upon the voices, expertise and needs of people with psychosocial disability. CoMHWA supports the recommendations of the DRC report and we advocate for the WA government to make a greater commitment to promoting the rights and inclusion of people with psychosocial disability by prioritising actions address the recommendations relevant to State governments.

If you would like to read the entire briefing paper, please email sysadvocacy@comhwa.org.au

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CoMHWA has submitted our feedback to the [Department of Social Services’ consultation on Self-Directed Supports Registration](https://engage.dss.gov.au/selfdirect/). In this submission, CoMHWA focuses on providing feedback informed by the experiences of participants accessing NDIS for supports with psychosocial disability. We provide feedback on the proposed approach to registration for participants who want to self-direct their supports, the nature of requirements participants will need to meet to maintain registration, and the nature of support that should be offered to participants throughout the process.

CoMHWA heard from participants that while it is important to explore ways of ensuring that NDIS supports are high-quality and safe, enabling participants to access unregistered providers without placing barriers in their way is important to maintain participants’ choice, control, and capacity to access supports they need. We emphasise the need for easily accessible, straightforward and clear processes around registration and meeting obligations, and genuinely supportive information and contact from the NDIS Commission to facilitate participants’ capacity to self-direct supports.

If you would like to read the entire submission, please email sysadvocacy@comhwa.org.au

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TThis course is currently being offered FREE as part of the WA Mental Health Commissions commitment to supporting the Lived Experience (Peer) Workforces.

This is an intensive and fast paced course which provides training in Peer to Peer – discipline specific supervision (as distinct from line management or clinical supervision), by and for, the mental health consumer/Peer Workforce in Western Australia.

The training will include a mixture of:

* Weekly in-person training sessions in the Perth Metropolitan area
* Reflective practice homework and mandatory reading activities to be completed outside of class time (approx. 2 hours per week)
* Assessments to be completed both within and outside of class time

If you have any questions please contact CoMHWA's Education and Training team can be contacted at: education@comhwa.org.au

**Education & Training**

**Upcoming CoMHWA Core Training**

**The following trainings are now open for registration and FREE for CoMHWA members to attend!**

**Speak Up, Be Heard**

This interactive session covers the basics of self-advocacy and to build confidence in having your voice heard within your support networks.

Date: Tuesday 11th March 2025

Time: 10:30am - 3:30pm

Place: 14/275 Belmont Avenue, Cloverdale, WA 6104

**Intro to Peer Navigation (Online)**

This interactive workshop builds skills for individuals and peer workers to identify, locate and access suitable supports for their own or others wellbeing. Learn to draw to draw from your lived experience to aid you in navigating complex systems effectively.

Date: Wednesday 16th March 2025

Time: 10:30am - 1:30pm

Place: Online via Zoom

For all education and training questions/enquiries, CoMHWA's Education and Training team can be contacted at:

education@comhwa.org.au

(08) 9258 8911

**Criminal Law (Mental Impairment) Act 2023 Webinar for CoMHWA Members**

The Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS) works to protect the rights of people who are being treated involuntarily or who are at risk of involuntary treatment in Western Australia. We work with adults on involuntary orders in hospital, in the community, all children receiving mental health treatment in hospital, and residents of psychiatric hostels.

From 1st September 2024, MHAS expanded its services to provide advocacy for people with ‘mental impairment’ who have been accused of a crime. The new service is being offered under the new Criminal Law (Mental Impairment) Act 2023 (CLMI) and provides people with the right to an Advocate when they go to court, are in prison or on a supervision order in the community. ‘Mental impairment’ refers to people who have difficulty understanding, thinking and communicating because they have a mental illness, an acquired brain injury, an intellectual disability or a combination of these.

In this presentation the Chief Mental Health Advocate, Dr Sarah Pollock, and members of the CLMI team will unpack the new CLMI legislation and describe a typical consumer journey throughout the system. You will also hear how Advocates work within the CLMI space, and the impact the new service is having on consumers so far.

**When:**25th February, 11am-12.30pm

**Where:**Online via teams.

**RSVP:**admin@comhwa.org.au

**Peer Leadership & Support**

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The Stratford Scholarship and lecture has been established to honour Anthony Stratford’s contributions to the Peer Workforce.

Mind is offering a $10,000 scholarship for an emerging Peer leader or small group of peers across Australia to complete a 12-month project that contributes to innovation and transformational change that supports the mental health and wellbeing of people in their own and the broader community.

The Expression of Interest for the scholarship is open to an emerging Peer leader or small group of peers from diverse and intersectional backgrounds who want to be part of transformational change within their community. We would love to hear and be inspired by your ideas.

If you have any questions about the Stratford Scholarship, please email deb.carlon@mindaustralia.org.au

**Please note:  Applications close Friday 21 February 2025 at 11:59 pm (AEDT). Shortlisted applicants will be notified of next steps shortly after.**

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Mental Health Consumer Advisory Group

This committee provides a forum for robust peer review and discussion of mental health clinical outcome data and incidents. The group consists of consumers, carers and health staff.

What skills, experience and or interests would I need to bring to the service?

* An understanding of the health care concerns and needs of consumers and carers.
* A commitment to improving the safety and quality of care and services.
* Good verbal and written communication skills and an ability to work in a team with energy and enthusiasm.

What is the time commitment?

This meeting is held monthly for a maximum of one hour.

Closing date: **17th February 2025**

If you are interested, please contact Hanna Zurub (Lived Experience Peer Coordinator) via FSFHG.Service5admin@health.wa.gov.au

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| |  | | --- | | **Co-Design the National Roadmap for Mental Health Research Translation** | |
| |  | | --- | | In the ALIVE/ANU 2024 lived-experience priorities survey, young people shared their priorities on what matters such as: “Ways to make therapy more effective for adolescents”, “Breaking stigma through increasing awareness” and “How to alter mental health education to be less clinical and include different perspectives”.  ALIVE/ANU are now reaching out to invite young people (16-25 years old) living with mental ill-health and/or caring for a family member or kinship member with mental ill-health to contribute to the next phase- creating actions for what matters to 16-25 year olds and co-design of the national roadmap for mental health research translation through co-design sessions.  These sessions aim to help further understanding of what matters most to young people in mental health research and what research and translation efforts should be directed towards.  For more information please contact Professor Victoria Palmer (The ALIVE National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation) Tel: +61 3 8344 4987 | Email: v.palmer@unimelb.edu.au | |

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| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | Work Type: Casual  Level: HSO Level G2  Location: Stirling Catchment  Closing Date: 4pm 14th February 2025  This position is responsible for contributing a carer perspective to guide the North Metropolitan Health Service Mental Health Public Health and Dental Services Community Adult Mental Health Service in service planning, development and evaluation of programs. This includes identifying and engaging relevant carer networks, and promoting and coordinating carer participation and feedback processes that will enable contribution to planning, development, evaluation and system wide improvement.  If you’d like to know more about this role please contact Claire Mann on 08 9344 5400 or email [claire.mann@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:claire.mann@health.wa.gov.au).**.** | | | |  | | | |  | | --- | | **Valued Lives - Queer Disability Network Information Session** | | |  |   Valued Lives was founded in 2013 by a group of families with lived experience, determined to improve the support available for people with disabilities. Empowered Connections is working with Valued Lived to establish Peer groups in Perth-Metro and southwest areas and help Peers facilitate, mentor and upkeep the Peer groups that are created.  Recently Empowered Connections have teamed up with City Of Fremantle to host Peer sessions for Queer folk with disabilities (psychosocial included). They are hosting an information session on Wednesday the 26th of February at the Fremantle Library to establish what Peers would like to happen in the monthly sessions.  **Date:** Wednesday 26th February 2025  **Where:** Mardoo Meeting Room, Fremantle Library  **Time:** 1:30-2:30pm  Empowered Connections will be recruiting a co-facilitator from the group who would be reimbursed monthly for their time. This can be anyone in the community who has lived experience, the co-facilitator would also receive mentorship and facilitation training. It's a really great pathway for someone wanting to get their foot in the door with Peer facilitation.  For more information please contact: INFO@VALUEDLIVES.ORG.AU 1800 833 944   |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **YDAN x RTRFM - Breaking Sound Barriers EOI Open**  The Youth Disability Advocacy Network is pleased to be partnering with RTRFM and Concepts4Change to bring *Breaking Sound Barriers*Season 3.  Breaking Sound Barriers is a podcasting and broadcasting course, specifically designed to meet the needs of people with disability. After a successful Season 2 in 2024, and thanks to funding from Synergy and YDAN, there are 7 positions available for people with disability to participate in this course.  **Key Dates:**   * Applications close **21st February 2025** * Course runs for 12 weeks between **April – June 2025**   **To Apply:**  You can apply by completing an Expression of Interest form in the following formats:   * Calling RTRFM on 08 9260 9214 * Submitting a voice note to [breakingbarriers@rtrfm.com.au](mailto:breakingbarriers@rtrfm.com.au) | | |  | | |  | | --- | | **Join the Community Advisory Council and help shape the health care experience**  The Sir Charles Gairdner Osborne Park Health Care Group (SCGOPHCG) is recruiting new consumers and carers for its Community Advisory Council (CAC).  If you are a consumer or carer who is passionate about improving health outcomes for the community, solutions oriented and interested in shaping the health care experience at our hospitals, the CAC could be for you.  To be eligible, applicants must have experienced a health service provided at Sir Charles Gairdner or Osborne Park Hospital over the past five years as a consumer, carer or family member.  The CAC meets monthly, either in person or online, for a period up to two hours at least 10 times per year.  The term of appointment for members is two years from the date of the appointment.  **Applications close 25 February 2025.**  To apply email: communityadvisorycouncil.scgh@health.wa.gov.au. | | |  |   **Tecwyn Jones Bequest Grants - 2025 Applications are now open**  Are you or your family member or carer already receiving MIFWA’s services and could do with a small amount of financial assistance to purchase resources and equipment, attend events, enrol into a course, or seek some respite?  If yes and you’re a current MIFWA member registered before Monday 17th March 2025, you may be eligible for a grant.  Follow the guidelines and **submit your application form by 5pm on Monday 17th of March 2025.**  Please contact Alison at alison.nesbit@mifwa.org.au if you have any questions or need assistance.  **Circle of Friends - Mental Health Coffee Groups**  Circle of Friends has recently expanded to include Cockburn!  All of the groups are run in local cafes by volunteers who have lived experience of mental health issues. Each group runs weekly without fail to honour our commitment to always be there, especially for people who are attending for the first time. We strive to offer a heartfelt, non-clinical service, thus we do not take names, use forms or require anyone to speak. The groups are free of charge; people can drop in without notice and bring a support person. The groups run for 2 hours, and we simply have coffee together and discuss whatever comes up.  **Cockburn:** Jamaica Blue Coffee Shop, Tuesday 10-11am  **Kwinana:**Dome Coffee Shop, Thursday 11am-1pm  **Baldivis:**Dome Coffee Shop, Friday 10am-12pm  **Waikiki:** Dome Coffee Shop, Saturday 10am-12pm  If you have any questions or would like to volunteer as a facilitator please contact Circle of Friend Coordinator Claire Willans: kcmj@iinet.net.au |

**CoMHWA Events**

**Yoga for Everyone at CoMHWA**

CoMHWA is hosting weekly gentle yoga sessions on Fridays at our Belmont offices. It’s a great way to connect with other members and meet some of the CoMHWA staff.

**Never tried yoga before?**

No worries, come and find out what it’s all about. You don’t need to be super flexible or fit. Elaine, our In-Reach and Engagement Officer, is also a certified yoga instructor and has experience in providing modified and accessible yoga for all abilities and stages.

**Don’t have a way to get to us?**

Join us online via zoom! Every session is live streamed so you can join us from the comfort of your own home. Email [admin@comhwa.org.au](mailto:admin@comhwa.org.au) to gain access the zoom sessions.

**Do I need to bring anything?**

Nope! We provide mats and any other props you might need. However if you’d prefer you are welcome to bring your own mat and anything else you feel will make you feel most comfortable. Be sure to wear something you feel free to move in!

**Join us in the training room at CoMHWA**

**Unit 14/275 Belmont Avenue**

**Every Friday, 4pm - 5pm**

**No need to RSVP, just show up!**

**Sector News & Events**

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Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031 has been updated to respond to recommendation 5.2 of the Disability Royal Commission final report published in 2023.

The Royal Commission recommended that the Strategy should be reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects the issues raised and recommendations made by the Royal Commission, including to directly address the issue of segregation of people with disability.

There will be an Independent Evaluation of the Strategy late this year, and we will keep our members posted about any opportunities for people with lived experience to get involved in the evaluation.

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| |  | | --- | | **LGBTQIA+ People with Disability, Free to Be Proud** | |
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This event will connect LGBTQIA+ people with disability with the broader LGBTQIA+ community, promote intersectionality, and foster greater understanding of the issues they face.

**When:** Wednesday 19 February 2025

**Time:** 11:00am – 1:00pm (AWST, WA)

**Where:** Zoom (Access link will be sent closer to the event)

**Cost:**Free

This event will have live captioning and Auslan interpretation. Attendees can advise of other access requirements when registering.

This two-hour event will feature inspiring speakers, thought-provoking panel discussions, and opportunities for audience engagement. You can submit questions beforehand or ask them live during the Q&A session.

**WA Digital Inclusion Project is coming to Kwinana**

The WA Digital Inclusion Project aims to uplift the digital literacy skills of West Australians for work, learning and life. Personally, I manage the Community Champions Program, which engages community members from marginalised communities who are digitally excluded and trains them to provide digital skills information sessions to the community in a peer-to-peer learning model.

The WA Digital Inclusion Project are running digital skills introductory sessions across numerous locations in the Perth metro and regional areas and they have such a session coming up in Kwinana in February.

The introductory session covers essential eSafety skills like how to recognise and avoid scams, where to find reliable information online and how to connect with other local resources such as libraries and community organisations. It is free to attend, participants do not need to bring a device with them, and they are open to all members of general public.

**Date:**Monday, 24th February 2025

**Time:**11.00am – 12.00pm

**Location:** Darius Wells Library & Resource Centre, Kwinana Town Centre

**Registration:**Registration is essential via Humanitix.

If assistance is needed to register, the Project team can be contacted on champions@wacoss.org.au or via text on 0429 950 145.

**CoMHWA Privacy, Feedback and Complaints Policies**

Did you know that our Privacy Policy and our Feedback, Complaints and Grievances Policy   
are both available on our website?

Visit <http://www.comhwa.org.au/contact-us/> for further information or request a hard copy version by calling us on 9258 8911 or email [admin@comhwa.org.au](mailto:admin@comhwa.org.au)

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