

## **Background on the NSW Consumer Voice Group**

The NSW Consumer Voice Group was started in 2007 when NSW Consumer workers, consumer representatives & consumer volunteers organised a forum to examine the pros and cons of whether mental health consumers should be allowed to smoke in locked wards on NSW Health facilities.

The NSW Consumer Voice Group continues to meet to address the issues that are coming from NSW Health's implementation of the NSW Health Smoke Free Workplace Policy (PD2005\_375) a copy of the policy can be found at;

[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/PD/2005/PD2005\\_375.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/policies/PD/2005/PD2005_375.html) and the removal of exemptions for mental health consumers and designated smoking areas in all Psychiatric unit in NSW.

See page 3 from the guidelines: These exemptions for specific patient groups should be determined by the local implementation committee on the basis of risk assessment or compassion, but might include palliative care, mental health, drug and alcohol, involuntary patients or patients in crisis.

The NSW Consumer Voice group would like you to join with other members of the Right to Choose Alliance [www.righttochoosealliance.com.au](http://www.righttochoosealliance.com.au) to ensure that the NSW Health Smoke Free Workplace Policy (PD2005\_375) policy when fully implemented will be done with as much consistency as humanly possibly across the state.

All NSW Health campuses are in the process of implementing the NSW Smoke Free Workplace Policy, which mandates that all hospitals campus under the control of NSW Health should be totally smoke-free. More information is available at <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/health-promotion/tobacco/>

Currently some mental health facilities are exempt from the policy and smoking is permitted in outdoor designated smoking areas only. It is NSW Department of Health policy that all inpatients in NSW public hospitals who smoke are assessed for nicotine dependence and if appropriate, offered nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) for the duration of their admission.

In June 2007 the Chief Health Officer approved the establishment of the NSW Smoke Free Mental Health Taskforce to engage stakeholders in progression towards the implementation of smoke-free policies in NSW mental health facilities. The inaugural meeting of the Smoke Free Mental Health Taskforce took place in November 2007. We are still waiting for the report with recommendations on how this will be done.

Two members of the NSW Consumers Workers Forum are involved with the NSW Health Smoke Free Working Group and the suggestions from the June 2007 forum were taken back to the working group for consideration.

A web site: [www.righttochoosealliance.com.au](http://www.righttochoosealliance.com.au) has been developed that has a copy of the submission and other information that you may find useful.

## **Feedback from the NSW Consumer Voice Group**

On Wednesday 18 March 2009 the NSW Consumer Voice group meet to discuss future directions for the group.

The people present at the meeting brainstormed the issues they wanted discussed at the meeting and the following list was created.

1. Round table catch up – members shared what they had been doing since the last meeting
2. Update with development of smoking survey
3. The Right to Choose Alliance
4. Feedback from NSW Consumer Workers Forum Annual Forum
5. Be Smoke Free Project
6. How does the group publicise the work we are doing
7. What happening in other countries
  - 7.1. Scotland
  - 7.2. Great Britian
  - 7.3. An interesting news sheet
  - 7.4. New Zealand
8. Future meetings

## **2. Update with development of smoking survey**

Work on developing the survey that will be used to collect information about how NSW Health is implementing the smoking cessation across NSW was the first item that was discussed.

Twenty-three people have commented on the layout and design of the survey and that feedback is available through this link:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=K\\_2f6315DAmQCk5MM6X05mmpJXPc0Z0raWYKqFgSD7bkM\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=K_2f6315DAmQCk5MM6X05mmpJXPc0Z0raWYKqFgSD7bkM_3d)

A survey-working group was formed at the meeting and members will be meeting with the Cancer Council shortly to receive some feedback on the design. We are hopeful that the survey will be ready to disseminate in the next few months

## **3. The Right to Choose Alliance**

A short presentation was done on The Right to Choose Alliance a group that has been set up to support the Right of People to choose when they stop smoking.

More information about the group can be found at [www.righttochoosealliance.com.au](http://www.righttochoosealliance.com.au)

Once you have visited the Right to Choose Alliance web we would appreciate if you would take the time to complete the survey at the following link.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=YnQ SJH\\_2bib\\_2b7YhImgPOU3uw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=YnQ SJH_2bib_2b7YhImgPOU3uw_3d_3d)

The group has also started a discussion group that you are encouraged to join at

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/righttochoosealliance>

## **4. Feedback from NSW Consumer Workers Forum Annual Forum**

At the NSW Consumer Workers Forum (CWF) Annual Forum the issue of implementing the NSW Health smoke free policy was voted as the number 1 issue that consumer workers members wanted the CWF committee to address.

The CWF chairperson, Douglas Holmes gave a outline of how the CWF committee would like to join with other members of the NSW Consumer Voice group to ensure that if the NSW Health Smoke Free Workplace Policy (PD2005\_375) policy is to be implemented that it is done with as much consistency as humanly possibly.

Consumers workers have issues with staff asking MH consumers to give up smoking. The timing of quitting is important. Inpatients are stressed and the non smoking policy is not often welcome but nicotine replacement does work along with psychological interventions.

Most Consumer workers agree that smoking does need to be addressed, however the service needs to ensure additional support is offered. There are issues with non MH settings with people leaving or not waiting to be seen with the need to have a smoke – this is a concern for MH pts waiting to be assessed in ED.

The majority of mental health workers will say categorically that one shouldn't insist on no smoking when someone is seriously ill, but it should rather be negotiated as they improve. They said they don't know of a service where there is absolutely no smoking at all.

If you would like more information about the group send any requests for information about the group to [nswcwf@optusnet.com.au](mailto:nswcwf@optusnet.com.au)

## **5. Be Smoke Free Project**

The Be Free Smoke Project is being implemented at St Vincent's Mental Health Service which went smoke free on Monday 3 November 2008. By smoke free St Vincent's Mental Health means that:

- We will help manage your nicotine dependence when you are admitted to Caritas, NOT that we are making you give up the smokes forever;
- Nicotine dependence and withdrawal can be managed with a range of products, like nicotine patches, inhalers etc; and behavioural support and activities;
- It is still your choice to smoke when you are discharged, but if you want to continue to be smoke free we can help you to get good support for this in the community;
- Some consumers have found, after being smoke free for 2 or 3 weeks that they don't want to go back to smoking;
- Remember, apart from better health, if you are not smoking, you may be able to reduce some medications, have access to many places that smokers can't go and have more money in your pocket!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The service is currently working with the local communities to identify strategies that will assist with ensuring that the support for consumers is available when they leave hospital. One such partnership is with The Wayside Chapel through the Be Smoke Free project. The working group is interested in working with others across the Inner City to develop a local version of the South Australian 'Be Smoke Free project'.

More information about The Be Smoke Free project can be found at [www.quitsa.org.au](http://www.quitsa.org.au) . The 'Be Smoke Free' group meets every Thursday from 2pm start till 4pm

The meeting is in the upstairs conference room of The Wayside Chapel, 29 Hughes St, King's Cross which is just a short walk from King's X station.

The overall aim of the group is to develop a social support network among people in the Inner City that: promotes information sharing about quitting smoking, social support for those with an interest in quitting smoking, thinking about quitting smoking or wanting to cut back on their smoking.

## **6. How does the NSW Consumer Voice group publicise the work we are doing**

Members present discussed how we could promote the work the group is undertaking.

Suggestion were word of mouth, send information out through our email list, present papers at conferences

Feel free to send this information out through your networks to promote the cause

## **7. What happening in other countries**

### **7.1 Scotland**

Freedom to choose has just completed a submission to the Scottish government consultation on the issue of removing a smoking ban exemption from psychiatric hospitals and units.

The general Scottish smoking ban was imposed in 2006, but psychiatric and other residential care settings were exempted. They wish not only to get public approval for a ban in all buildings without exemption, but also for a ban in the grounds of hospitals. This goes beyond current legislation and is not enforceable under Scottish law.

They have also mounted a petition on the Scottish government website that requests a review of this consultation, as the standard of consultation is very shoddy. Many people from outside Scotland have supported this.

[http://epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/view\\_petition.asp?PetitionID=310](http://epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/view_petition.asp?PetitionID=310)

(website for UK-wide organisation)

[www.freedom2choose.info](http://www.freedom2choose.info) Freedom2Choose (Scotland)

### **7.2 Great Britan**

Patients at a top security psychiatric \*hospital\* have brought a test case over the Government's smoking ban.

"In the case of the three Rampton Mental Hospital patients fighting for their Human Rights in the High Court in February this year Freedom2Choose have literally thrown every resource at their disposal in a bid to obtain the correct result. They were denied their Human Rights in a previous High Court action when Justice Pill declared that security must always override Human Rights. This decision was a clear infringement of the patients Human Rights.

Freedom2Choose offered the patients legal team every resource available including the testimony of world renowned professors within the mental illness branch of medicine.

We have also suggested that the legal team put the suggestion forward that a solid built extension be built to afford both security and the patients right to smoke. In our humble opinion we feel that even our government, in collusion with the judiciary, will be able to deny this appeal."

Phil Johnson, f2cMidlands

The patients at \*Rampton\* in Nottinghamshire say that the ban, which came into force last year, is a "disproportionate interference" with their rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Three patients are all seeking judicial review before Lord Justice Pill and Mr Justice Silber at the High Court in London. Their lawyers argue that the \*hospital\* is their home, and to prevent their smoking there when they are not free to go elsewhere to light up interferes disproportionately with their Article 8 private rights. New rules under the anti-smoking legislation prohibit lighting up indoors in public places such as hospitals from July 1. Smoking in designated rooms would no longer be permitted, which would effectively mean a complete ban for psychiatric patients who, because of the nature of their illness, could not be allowed outdoors.

What an absolute disgraceful judgement. They have found the flimsiest of reasons and denied an appeal to the judgement. "Both health and security considerations justify the ban"-actually they don't! Passive smoke never killed anyone and a designated room for smokers was the simple answer!

Banning smoking 'in your home' cannot be legalised in any way, shape or form but Pill has found a way to wriggle out of a very tight spot here as they are frightened to death they might set a precedent! Just how controlling are this government because it looks very much as if this was a "controlled experiment".

Shame on the judiciary for cow-towing to the whims of the anti's. So much for upholding the laws on discrimination, equal rights & human rights-you've just blown all three out of the water. Is it any wonder the people of this land have lost all faith in the powers that be-too many strings being pulled by a few puppeteers in Britain nowadays. I won't call it Great Britain anymore because the "great" part has gone forever!

### **7.3 An interesting news sheet**

TOBACCO.ORG

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This is informative site with a tobacco newsletter,

If you wish to subscribe, go to this

address: If address is not a link, copy and paste it into your web browser.)

[http://www.tobacco.org/subscribe/?sfn\\_cookie=350057:c5356dc27e4a72a819bddd69bbe50fbd](http://www.tobacco.org/subscribe/?sfn_cookie=350057:c5356dc27e4a72a819bddd69bbe50fbd)

### **7.4 New Zealand**

Mentally ill patients forced to quit smoking at one of the largest mental health facilities in the country are more likely to become violent, says a former mental health worker.

Paula Jessep, Waikato District Health Board's senior consumer adviser at the Henry Rongomau Bennett Centre from mid-2003 to late 2005 said she believed the centre's new smokefree policy would lead to increased aggression among acutely ill patients, more unexplained absences, and fewer smokers in the community seeking help.

Ms Jessep, herself a smoker, has also experienced mental illness. "I don't support smoking but when I'm sick I smoke like a train," she said.

The smokefree policy, which bans patients and staff from smoking inside and outside the centre, was announced last week and took effect from Tuesday.

"There's going to be an increase in aggression, violence and Awols. Watch this space because I think there's going to be an increase in assaults."

Mental illness sufferers she had spoken to said they would sooner go to Waikeria Prison or not tell their mental health worker how sick they were to avoid being admitted somewhere they couldn't smoke. Ms Jessep also queried the level of consultation over the ban.

Waikato District Health Board Mental Health and Addiction Services group manager Jeff Bennett said it was important to note the centre was not nicotine free. Support for smokers included advice about how to cope without cigarettes, nicotine patches, chewing gum, lozenges, nicotine-filled inhalers, or referral to support agencies such as Quitline.

"To do nothing would be a greater travesty than to address the issue of nicotine addiction among mental health service users and stigmatise this group of individuals further," Mr Bennett said.

He defended the consultation method saying GPs, primary health, and community organisations were sent letters outlining the initiative on March 13.

The story can be found here: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/2310367>

## **8. Future meetings**

The next meeting of the NSW Consumer Voice group meeting will take place on 20 May from 2 till 4pm at 299 Forbes St Darlinghurst.

### **Agenda for May meeting**

Welcome

Catch up

Notes from March meeting

Business arising from Notes

Update with development of smoking survey The Right to Choose Alliance Feedback from NSW Consumer Workers Forum Annual Forum Be Smoke Free Project How does the group publicise the work we are doing Future meetings

Thanks for taking the time to read through this news sheet and this link will allow you to make comments on this news sheet and include any new items for the agenda for the next meeting or indicate if you are coming to the meeting:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ir06MmV3le0mbTnxiXWdVg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ir06MmV3le0mbTnxiXWdVg_3d_3d)

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