
DATE 14 September 2010

MMHA launches *new national* mental health workforce standards

**** PRESS RELEASE EMBARGO: NOT FOR PUBLICATION BEFORE 6AM SEPTEMBER 16, 2010 ****

media release

The New South Wales Governor, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, will launch Australia's first ever National Cultural Competency Standards today, boosting recovery prospects for Australians from non-English speaking backgrounds living with a mental illness.

The Standards form part of the new **National Cultural Competency Tool (NCCT) for Mental Health Services**, which will be launched at The Mental Health Services Conference at the Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, Sydney at 1:30pm AEST.

Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) developed the tool in partnership with the Government of Western Australia's Mental Health Commission. As well as containing a set of National Cultural Competency Standards, the NCCT resource pack includes a range of practical aids and strategies, such as a self-assessment checklist, to help agencies work in a multicultural setting.

MMHA Chair Abd Malak said the NCCT is an Australian first.

"This resource will ultimately help consumers from diverse backgrounds by assisting mental health providers to develop and implement strategic and organisational plans that explicitly cater for cultural and linguistic diversity," he said.

"It will also help mental health services comply with national accreditation standards, meet legislative requirements, and discharge their responsibility to provide health care which satisfies the needs of every individual."

Catering for cultural and linguistic diversity is critical because culture can impact upon perceptions of a mental illness, its symptoms and management. Moreover, if a person speaks English as a second language they may not be able to adequately explain their symptoms, increasing the likelihood of misdiagnosis and improper treatment.

The tool is aligned with the Diversity Responsiveness Standard of the newly revised National Standards for Mental Health Services. Professor Malak said this should further prompt mental health providers to make cultural competency a priority.

"The National Cultural Competency Tool will help service providers cater for and anticipate cultural and language differences in their service design, delivery and evaluation," Professor Malak said. "It was developed to empower organisations to help people recover more quickly, to spend less time in hospital and to avoid relapses.

"We look forward to working alongside our stakeholders to implement this tool nationally."

Contact details:

MMHA National Programs Manager, Georgia Zogalis: 0407 933 685

MMHA Communications Officer, Rebecca Lewis: (02) 9840 3333 or 0408 445 794

Website: www.mmha.org.au