



Review of Mental Health Legal Centre

Advance Statement Project

Dove Ideal Project Solutions 2018







An Multi-Stakeholder Evaluation of Mental Health Legal Centre's Advance Statement Project

Evaluator:

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Executive Summary

This report presents an evaluation of Mental Health Legal Centre's Advance Statement Project funded through the Helen McPherson Smith Trust and the R.E. Ross Trust. The evaluation is focused on assessing the project achievements of its initial objectives and intended outcomes, through the perspectives of MHLC's project stakeholders, particularly its consumers.

In Victoria, advance statements were established in the Mental Health Act 2014 as an important component of its recovery-oriented framework. Advance statements allow people experiencing mental illness to express their treatment preferences prior to any diminished decision-making capacity that may accompany periods of mental health crisis. International research has shown that the use of advance statements reduces the frequency and duration of episodes of involuntary / compulsory treatment.

MHLC's Advance Statement Project was developed to increase the awareness of the existence and benefits of advance statements amongst both consumers and clinicians of mental health services and to increase their uptake.

Key Evaluation Findings

MHLC's Advance Statement Project has achieved its core objectives to:

- ◆ Deliver Community Legal Education sessions to clinicians, consumers, advocates and lawyers
- ◆ Establish positive relationships with mental health services
- ◆ Provide legal advice related to Advance Statements
- ◆ Facilitate the development of high-quality Advance Statements
- ◆ Enhance MHLC's capacity to respond to the needs of mental health service consumers

Executive Summary

Consumer perspectives

Consumers co-designed the evaluation framework and contributed to continuous improvement processes during project implementation. Consumers have reported that the project delivers significant benefits; consumer feedback was very positive.

73% of survey respondents felt that Advanced Statement Project had a positive impact on their well-being, including feeling safer, more secure and happier

Highest and lowest scores

- ◆ **A+ 95%** How friendly are the MHLC's Advance Statement team?
- ◆ **A+ 93%** MHLC's Advance Statement Project is an important service
- ◆ **B+ 76%** I was kept 'in the loop' during the process

Anything we can do better?

'Its hard to get into contact with your service so making that better would be good'

Any other comments/ feedback/ suggestions?

Consumer perspective

'I found it a very respectful & reflective process. Was pleased not to be channelled into a fixed template. Liked [lawyer's name]'s flexible approach''

Carer perspective

'Other than they do a great job, its sad they are under radar and under-funded. Need marketing of MHLC so people know they are there.

People often confused, lost and disadvantaged in Mental Health services and could be really helped by MHLC.

Clinicians have very little awareness of the existence of advanced statements. No good having a law without any support / training education to understand or apply. People on emergency ward didn't know what the paper was!?! Disgraceful no one knows about them. No one given responsibility for it! No role to train.

Usually clinicians don't listen to carers or carers but they see the headed paper from a legal service and they take notice; threat of legal involvement makes a big difference as legal action get attention from clinicians.

Lawyers highly needed in the mental health system'

Executive Summary

Stakeholder perspective

Overall, the project received positive feedback from the staff at mental health services, who considered that the project delivers a very important service for their clients and that advance statements protect the human rights of consumers.

Highest and lowest scores

- ◆ **A+ 95%** MHLC's Advance Statement Project is an important service
- ◆ **A 86%** MHLC's Advance Statement Project staff are valued by our agency
- ◆ **B** Stakeholder agency staff awarded MHLC's project B grades (70%-80%) for a range of questions related to communication

Stakeholder Agency Perspectives

Areas for improvement:

- ◆ Communication
- ◆ Marketing / Promotion of service
- ◆ Information resources - have simplified and youth oriented health promotion literature about advance statements

Best things about project?

- “
- ◆ Patients feeling involved in care and as though being heard
 - ◆ Feelings of empowerment
 - ◆ Approach from MHLC staff
 - ◆ Advance Statement team work really well with our challenging patients - always understanding of their mental health challenges. Never showing frustration “

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The 2016-17 Report on Mental Health Service Use in Victoria shows that there has been a small steady increase in the existence of advance statements, however, of the currently 66,435 registered clients of mental health services in Victoria, only 2.34% of consumers or 1,554 advance statements are recorded in Victoria. There is still a significant amount of work to be done to increase the awareness and use of advanced statements, in order to realise the person-centred intentions of the Act.

MHLC delivers a highly successful Health-Justice Partnership with Bolton Clarke Homeless Persons Project and the critical element of success has been the highly collaborative partnership model that has been developed. The partnership model includes monthly steering committee meetings between MHLC, BCHPP and DIPS to embed cross-agency continuous improvement mechanisms including real-time monitoring of project activity and referral rates, frequent practitioner and client evaluations alongside co-designed, participatory, regularly delivered CLE curriculum.

The funding Trusts should be acknowledged for their willingness to provide the resources to pilot this project model, particularly so early in the implementation of the Act. There is a clear need for the Advance Statements Project to continue. To enhance client outcomes and the scale of the project's impacts, further development of the collaborative HJP partnership model is recommended.

Key Recommendations

- 1) Secure resources to extend and replicate this initiative. It is considered to be highly important from the perspectives of consumers and mental health clinicians**
- 2) Establish regular project Steering Group(s) including partner agencies and consumers/ Peer workers**
- 3) Create Easy English and Youth-friendly versions of the Advance Statement information leaflet**
- 4) Improve consistency of project data recording and monitoring**
- 5) Increase the frequency of stakeholder evaluations, particularly from consumers to enable continuous improvement and consumer-led service adaptations**