

# Strategic Framework for the NSW Forensic Mental Health System

## Part 3

### Implementation Plan



**February 2011**

NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc. (NSW CAG)  
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Dear Marlyn,

**Re: Strategic Framework for NSW Forensic Mental Health System**

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc. (NSW CAG) is the independent, statewide organisation representing the views of mental health consumers at a policy level, working to achieve and support systemic change. Our vision is for all mental health consumers to be able to participate meaningfully in society and to experience fair access to quality and recovery focused services which reflect their needs.

NSW CAG is pleased to offer comments on the Implementation plan of the Strategic Framework for the NSW Forensic Mental Health System (the framework). Due to time constraints, NSW CAG has focused comments on the consumer participation strategies identified under the framework.

We look forward to being a part of the implementation of this framework, and working in collaboration with the lead agencies involved.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Oakley  
Chief Executive Officer

## **Basis of this advice**

NSW CAG exists to ensure that policy makers hear the perspectives of mental health consumers across NSW. To enable our representation of mental health consumers and to advocate for systemic change, NSW CAG conducts a range of consultations with consumers throughout NSW.

NSW CAG's comments and recommendations regarding this draft framework are based on information elicited from our core work and hearing from consumers of mental health services in NSW, including information from:

- Over 1000 people (consumers, carers, service providers and other interested people) on our Network who are accessible via the internet;
- Face to face consultations with consumers within each Local Health Network across NSW; and
- Our knowledge base derived from consulting with consumers of mental health services in NSW over the last 17 years.

## **DRAFT Strategic Framework for the NSW Forensic Mental Health System Part 3 Implementation Plan**

NSW CAG has been pleased with the progress of the Draft Strategic Framework for the NSW Forensic Mental Health System so far. Obviously, however, the implementation of this framework is crucial to its success.

Due to time constraints, NSW CAG has been unable to do an extensive review of this document, however, there are some key points in regards to consumer participation that we have identified and wish to address.

### **Policy Direction 1: Systems**

#### *a) Determining the level of Consumer Participation*

Both the final point of strategy 1.1 and the second point of 1.2 state that one aspect will be to '*Determine level of consumer participation and implement accordingly*'.

NSW CAG strongly supports the inclusion of consumer participation in the implementation of this framework. However, we are concerned that there is no indication of how the level of consumer participation will be determined and who will facilitate this. By leaving this statement open, there may be significant discrepancies and variation in how this strategy is implemented, and who it is implemented by. NSW CAG recommends that prior to any of the lead agencies determining the level, consultations with forensic consumers are held to gauge the means and level of desired consumer participation.

***Recommendation: That consultations with forensic consumers be held to gauge the means and level of desired consumer participation under the Implementation Plan.***

*b) Collaboration with NSW CAG*

In reference to 1.6, NSW CAG welcomes the proposal to develop collaborative practices between NSW CAG and all agencies involved in the implementation of this framework, and we look forward to developing these relationships. The framework's recommendation regarding consumer roles with the forensic system may benefit from referencing the Consumer Workers' Forum Project (CWF), being conducted by NSW CAG in partnership with the Consumer Workers' Forum Organising Committee and NSW Health. This project is developing a framework for the NSW mental health consumer workforce. The framework for the CWF project will be presented to the Mental Health Program Council for endorsement in August 2011.

In regards to the development and implementation of the MH-CoPES Framework in a Forensic environment, NSW CAG advises that the words '*Investigate with a view to*' should be removed as this process has already commenced.

Additionally, we strongly support the recommendation of a recovery approach to be operated within forensic services.

***Recommendation: That stronger links are built between NSW CAG, MH-CoPES and the Consumer Workers' Forum Project.***

***Recommendation: That 'investigate with a view to' be removed from the matter for consideration referring to MH-CoPES.***

**Policy Direction 2: Services**

In 1.2, NSW CAG is incorrectly referred to as the Consumer Action Group and this should be amended to Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health. We are, however, pleased to see that our concerns regarding the separation of forensic consumers and high risk civil consumers has been noted and we continue to advocate for this to be put into practice.

NSW CAG strongly supports the provision of supported accommodation for consumers within the forensic system. NSW CAG recommends that liaising occurs with service providers such as the Community Restorative Centre who have extensive experience in the accommodation support needs of people post-release from prison and forensic institutions.

***Recommendation: That the accommodating of forensic consumers and high risk civil consumers in separate service environments should continue to be a priority for mental health services.***

***Recommendation: That community agencies, such as Community Restorative Centre, are consulted in the process of developing community based supported accommodation.***