



**THE HON MARK BUTLER MP
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING**

**RESPONSE TO THE SCOPING STUDY FOR A NEW PEAK NATIONAL
MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER ORGANISATION —
A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING**

I am pleased to release the Final Report of the Scoping Study, *Establishment of a New Peak National Mental Health Consumer Organisation* (March 2010), and the Australian Government's response to the Report's recommendations, and to advise of next steps.

The Final Report of the Scoping Study includes a number of recommendations covering 15 key areas. It provides comprehensive guidance and advice on what directions, roles, functions and structures should be considered in establishing a new national mental health consumer organisation, and suggests a number of approaches to ensure sound organisational, financial and governance arrangements are embedded in a new organisation.

The Australian Government's response (attached) to the Final Report of the Scoping Study addresses each of its recommendations, and both documents are also available online at www.health.gov.au/mentalhealth.

On 1 July 2011, the Government announced its support to establish a new national mental health consumer organisation under an auspice arrangement (for the first two years). This decision to initially auspice the organisation was in part informed by the Scoping Study's recommendation to engage a consultancy group during the first 18 months to ensure the organisation's ongoing viability.

The Government believes an auspice arrangement will be most beneficial and will ensure the new organisation has the best possible chance of sustainable impact and success over the longer term. Importantly, we are committed to transitioning the new organisation to full independence following a review and report on the initial two year auspice arrangement.

Currently, I am considering an appropriate auspice body to provide this solid foundation and ensure the best start for the new organisation. I look forward to confirming that auspice body in the coming months.

Most important of all, the Australian Government is committed to ensuring mental health consumers are central to ongoing mental health reform efforts. The new organisation will have a critical role to play in this regard – therefore, the priority goal is to get the new organisation up and running as soon as is feasibly possible to provide mental health consumers with a strong and consolidated voice that can assist in influencing and shaping mental health reform. This was another reason why I have decided that the organisation should initially be auspiced by an established and strong entity.

But consumers have also told me that perhaps the most critical thing is that we create the mechanism to ensure the voices and views of consumers are front and centre in informing the establishment of the organisation – your organisation.

In late January 2012, after the holiday period is over, we will be inviting mental health consumers around Australia to express their interest in becoming a member of a Consumer Reference Group.

This Group will work with the auspice body in guiding the establishment of the new organisation, informing strategic planning discussions, building the membership base, and setting up appropriate mechanisms to ensure consumers are involved throughout the process.

The Government also wishes to see consumer and carer views informing the important work of Australia's first National Mental Health Commission in independently monitoring and reporting on the performance and outcomes of the mental health and other related systems. The Commission is on track to be established early in 2012. This provides more impetus to progress with the establishment of the new organisation as soon as possible and to ensure it has a strong, stable, and diverse membership and foundational base to be able to truly represent the views of consumers from across Australia. Ms Robyn Kruk has been announced as Chief Executive Officer designate and Professor Allan Fels AO as Chair of the Commission.

The broad purpose for the new peak is to bring together a diversity of mental health consumers and mental health consumer organisations and groups enabling them to work collaboratively towards achieving a shared national vision leading to improved quality of life, social justice and inclusion (Scoping Study: page 16).

In terms of the other Scoping Study findings and suggestions, overall, the Australian Government supports its overarching proposal, suggested core purpose, and key recommendations as providing a good basis to inform the establishment of the new organisation. Many of the recommendations will require further consideration by the auspice body, the Consumer Reference Group and the new organisation's Board (once established through a merit-based and membership driven process).

Finally, I would like to put on the record my sincere thanks to mental health consumers from around Australia, the former Consumer Expert Reference Group, and Craze Lateral Solutions for their involvement in the Scoping Study. The Final Report of the Scoping Study was vital to informing the Government's thinking and will be the touchstone for all future decisions.

We all want the new organisation to be built on strong foundations, be stable and secure, and to be able to effectively lead consumers in contributing to reform efforts aimed at achieving greater outcomes for people with mental illness, their families, and carers.

Ensuring the establishment of the new organisation is consumer-driven will be one of the keys to its success.

Regards

MARK BUTLER

Minister for Mental Health and Ageing

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Mental Health Reform

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FINAL REPORT OF THE SCOPING STUDY, *ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW PEAK NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER ORGANISATION*

RECOMMENDATIONS AND AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Australian Government's response to the overarching proposal and the recommendations under the 15 key areas identified in the Final Report of the Scoping Study, *Establishment of a New Peak National Mental Health Consumer Organisation* (March 2010), is presented in the attached table.

Background

Following the closure of the Australian Mental Health Consumer Network in 2008, the Department of Health and Ageing brought together a representative mental health consumer Expert Reference Group (ERG) to begin discussions about options for future national mental health consumer representation. The ERG confirmed the need for a nationally owned, representative and independent consumer voice.

In progressing the Government's commitment to mental health consumers, the Department engaged Craze Lateral Solutions Pty Ltd through a tender process, to undertake a Scoping Study and produce a final report for the consideration of Government about possible organisational models and business rules for future national mental health consumer representation.

The Scoping Study involved an extensive two stage consultation process – a discussion paper was developed and conversations were held with the mental health consumer sector on what it envisaged future representation could look like and what format that representation could be. The ERG and the Department worked closely with the consultant throughout this process.

The first stage involved extensive consultation with the mental health consumer sector and peak mental health bodies across Australia to gauge, identify and analyse views on possible and appropriate organisational models and structures.

During the second stage of consultation, the consultant presented and recorded feedback on the discussion paper and outlined possible options for future national consumer representation in a draft final report which was widely circulated for comment before being presented to Government for consideration.

In considering options and taking a decision about future national mental health consumer representation, the Government used the Final Report of the Scoping Study together with information gathered through its broader mental health stakeholder engagement strategy about future options for mental health reform.

This engagement strategy involved:

- over 15 face to face and online forums with consumers and carers in late 2010 attended by the Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, the Hon Minister Mark Butler MP;
- receipt of over 100 written submissions;
- advice from the Government's Mental Health Expert Reference Group and former National Advisory Council on Mental Health; and
- feedback from a range of other stakeholder meetings.

The Government is currently giving consideration to an appropriate body to auspice the new organisation - one with strength, stability, capacity, credibility, a reputable public profile, and proven track record of good governance. The Government looks forward to making an announcement about the auspice body in the coming months, and working with the sector in establishing a new organisation that will provide a strong and respected national voice for mental health consumers.

FINAL REPORT OF THE SCOPING STUDY, ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW PEAK NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER ORGANISATION (MARCH 2010)—RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Scoping Study Recommendations	Government Response
<i>Overarching Proposal</i>	
<p>A new national independent national hybrid model peak mental health consumer organisation which is built upon good governance principles, grounded in both grassroots and organisational experience and knowledge, demonstrates competence and integrity, and is strong, viable and accountable.</p>	<p>Supported. The Government has decided the new organisation will be established under an auspice body, with advice from a new Consumer Reference Group. The Government intends to call nationally for expressions of interest for membership of the Consumer Reference Group early in 2012.</p> <p>Good governance, competency and integrity will be vital to the new organisation’s success. It will be important for the Consumer Reference Group, the auspice body, and the Board once elected by the membership to ensure these principles are upheld.</p> <p>The Government is committed to transitioning the organisation to full independence following a review and report of the initial two year auspice arrangement.</p>
<i>Recommendations</i>	
1. Purpose of the new peak	
<p>1.1 The broad purpose for the new peak is to bring together a diversity of mental health consumers and mental health consumer organisations and groups enabling them to work collaboratively towards achieving a shared national vision leading to improved quality of life, social justice and inclusion.</p>	<p>Supported. With guidance of a new Consumer Reference Group, the unique roles of the organisation can be identified to ensure it is representative of and accountable to mental health consumers. The unique roles may evolve over time as the membership becomes established, and as part of the Board’s strategic planning.</p>
2. Language and meaning of ‘mental health consumers’	
<p>2.1 In the first instance, the voting rights of members of the new organisation, whether they be individuals or organisations, be restricted to those identifying as ‘mental health consumers’ or mental health consumer run organisations and groups.</p>	<p>Supported in principle, noting the Consumer Reference Group will assist the auspice body to work through the details of the voting rights and these details may be reviewed by the Board once elected by the membership.</p>

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2.2 Once the organisation is operational, that safe and respectful discussion and debate is enabled about language and meaning related to the concepts of ‘mental health consumer’ and ‘lived experience of mental illness and mental health issues’.	Supported, noting there may need to be robust discussion to reach consensus on the meaning of definitions, key concepts and terms in its first two years.
3. Key Roles	
<p>3.1 Role One: Achieving Change: To advocate for change through the provision of national independent advice, including to government, on issues, policies, practice and services affecting the lives of people with mental illness.</p> <p>3.2 Role Two: Changing Minds: To engage the community in breaking down stigma, preventing discrimination and promoting a positive understanding of people experiencing mental illness and mental health issues.</p> <p>3.3 Role Three: Participation Leadership: To provide national leadership on mental health consumer engagement and participation.</p> <p>3.4 Role Four: Sector Development Leadership: To provide national leadership on mental health consumer organisation and service development.</p>	Supported in principle, noting the exact initial roles of the new organisation will be identified with input and advice from the Consumer Reference Group and may evolve over time as the membership is established and the Board is appointed. In particular, the Government sees the organisation playing a key role in ‘Sector Development Leadership’ by fostering greater innovation and leadership within the mental health consumer sector.
4. Key work areas of the new peak	
<p>4.1 Corporate Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Financial Management b. Administration c. Human Resource Management d. Governance Support e. Occupational Health and Safety f. Communications Strategy g. Information Technology and Information Management h. Evaluation and quality framework 	Supported. A strong focus on corporate management will be important for the new organisation. An auspice body with well established governance and financial structures will provide a solid foundation for the new organisation in the first two years.

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<p>4.2 Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Policy and Advice b) Research c) Information and resource development d) Member and Sector Engagement and Development e) Media and Community Engagement f) Partnerships and Collaborations g) Provision of Consultancy Services 	<p>Supported in principle. Potential program areas for the new organisation will need to be considered by the Consumer Reference Group and auspice body, to ensure what it does has credibility and relevance, but also to ensure it does not take on too much too soon. This will in turn become a matter for the Board's consideration once it is elected by the membership.</p>
5. A model for the new peak	
<p>5.1 The new peak be a peak of consumer leadership and expertise comprising a hybrid voting membership of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Individuals b) Nationally-based and state-based mental health consumer organisations c) Other mental health consumer organisations, groups and networks. <p>5.2 A system of non-voting associate membership.</p> <p>5.3 Appointment, as appropriate, of patrons and/or life members in recognition of outstanding support to the Australian mental health consumer movement.</p> <p>5.4 That the new organisation once it is established and when appropriate to do so, explores the possibility and viability of establishing processes and structures for enabling the emergence and development of local, regional and state branches.</p>	<p>Supported in principle. The Consumer Reference Group and auspice body will need to consider the details of membership and voting issues. Once the organisation is established, the Board will need to determine and agree membership rules. It will be important for the new organisation to complement existing structures and where possible, address gaps in the mental health consumer sector. The proposal to set up local, regional and state branches would need to be carefully considered by the organisation once it is fully established.</p>
6. The new organisation's position	
<p>6.1 The following key characteristics comprise a starting point for positioning and defining the unique role of the new organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is a national community based, non-government organisation 	<p>Supported in principle noting that an auspice arrangement aims to provide the best possible start for the new organisation. Transition to full independence and autonomy should be informed by review and evaluation.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. It is an independent and autonomous organisation c. It is an organisation run by mental health consumers d. It is an organisation representing the interests of mental health consumers e. It provides policy advice directly to the Australian government and state and territory governments and advocates for change throughout the community to improve the health outcomes and quality of life for people experiencing mental illness f. It reports to and is accountable to mental health consumers Australia wide g. It is also accountable to its funding body(ies) for the performance of contractual arrangements and the acquittal of funds 	<p>The Government supports a national organisation that represents the diversity of mental health consumers (and is accountable to them), and which has the capacity to provide policy advice to the Australian Government.</p>
6.2 The new organisation demonstrates from its commencement a respect for the importance of the role of all key stakeholders and a commitment to working in partnership and collaboration with all parties.	Supported.
7. Organisational framework	
7.1 The organisational framework recommended is one which seeks to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The centrality of members within the organisation; b) The accountability of the Board to members; c) The accountability of the CEO to the Board for the performance of the organisation; d) The accountability of all staff and all programs through the CEO to the Board; e) The participation in the decision making and work of the organisation of a diversity of members through the progressive establishment of Advisory Committees; f) The participation in the decision making and work of the organisation of mental health consumers nationally and in each state and territory 	<p>Supported in principle, noting that the detail of the organisation's framework will be a matter for the organisation itself. The Consumer Reference Group will need to provide advice and work with the auspice body to ensure good governance is embedded from the outset.</p>

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through a planned program of member forums and conventions.	
8. Legal entity	
8.1 The new organisation be established as a company limited by guarantee.	Noted. The legal status of the organisation will require consideration once it reaches full independence.
9. Ensuring good governance	
<p>9.1. An expertise-based Board of no larger than 10-11 people.</p> <p>9.2. A pre-requisite for board membership is demonstrated expertise and experience with organisational governance.</p> <p>9.3. A term of tenure of two years with half of the board positions being declared vacant each year.</p> <p>9.4. A Board member have only two consecutive terms before stepping down for at least one term i.e. a maximum of four years.</p> <p>9.5. A merit-based & transparent selection process is recommended for appointment to the Board consisting of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The requirement that members nominate for appointment to the Board by submitting applications based on key selection criteria, through which they demonstrate the required competencies. – Oversight and support of the nomination process by an independent Appointments Committee of the Board. <p>9.6. The Board advertise the call for applications/nominations for the position of chair both within and without the organisation's current membership and through the print media nationally.</p> <p>9.7. In the first instance, the Project Team recommends that the call for nominations for appointment to the position of Inaugural Chair be advertised nationally.</p> <p>9.8. The Chair has lived personal experience of mental illness or mental health issues.</p>	Supported in principle, noting that these details will need to be determined by the organisation itself. The Consumer Reference Group will need to provide advice and work with the auspice body to ensure good governance is embedded from the outset.

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<p>9.9. The new organisation invest significantly in the training, support and professional development of all Board members.</p> <p>9.10. The new organisation develop a policy of cultural diversity in governance whereby it actively seeks to recruit Indigenous and CALD Australians to its Board.</p> <p>9.11. Board members be paid a sitting fee for attendance at Board meetings and other activities as agreed and specified by the Board and formalised in a schedule for each particular Board member.</p> <p>9.12. Sitting fees could be linked to an appropriate Commonwealth Government standard e.g. sitting fees for Ministerial or Departmental Advisory Committees.</p> <p>9.13. The inaugural Board demonstrate a commitment to quality and ethical behaviour and practice through the development and adoption of a Statement of Ethical Standards and a statement of values for the organisation.</p> <p>9.14. The establishment by the Board of the following Standing Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Finance Standing Committee b) Audit and Risk Standing Committee c) Board Renewal Standing Committee d) HR, OH&S and Organisational Policies and Procedures Standing Committee e) Membership Standing Committee f) Grievance and Complaints Committee g) Organisational Accreditation and Performance Review Standing Committee 	
10. Getting the work done	

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<p>10.1 All staff, Board Members, Advisory Committee members, Standing Committees and other people as appropriate be required to sign an Agreement to abide by the Statement of Ethical Standards.</p> <p>10.2 Following a recruitment process consistent with best practice in the field of personnel recruitment, that the best qualified and experienced person applying for the position of CEO be appointed.</p> <p>10.3 Human resource management policies of the new organisation demonstrate an emphasis on recruitment of staff based on requisite skills, knowledge and experience and the appointment of the best qualified applicant; an organisational commitment to staff training, development and performance review; and the proactive encouragement of mental health consumers to apply.</p> <p>10.4 Advisory Committees be progressively established for special interest groups including Indigenous, CALD, youth, older persons, alcohol and drug issues, rural and remote, and families as a key corporate strategy for ensuring diversity and renewal.</p> <p>10.5 In the first three years of the new organisation's life that priority be given to establishing the first three of the named committees.</p> <p>10.6 The new organisation gives priority to ensuring the participation of members in the work of the organisation by establishing a program of member forums nationally and in each state and territory.</p> <p>10.7 The new organisation give priority to establishing strategic partnerships to progress its Changing Minds role as quickly as is possible and practicable.</p> <p>10.8 The organisation invests significantly in technology and the necessary expertise given the importance of technology to the new organisation's communication capacity.</p> <p>10.9 The new organisation gives priority to developing renewal strategies to enable a diverse and growing membership to be sustained.</p> <p>10.10 The new organisation establishes communication strategies</p>	<p>Support in principle. The Consumer Reference Group and auspice body will need to determine the details for setting up appropriate mechanisms to enable the new organisation to be well placed to get the work done, applying high ethical standards, merit-based recruitment processes and strong consumer participation, communication and evaluation strategies.</p>

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<p>encompassing those consumers who do not seek organisational membership in order to decrease the risk of dependence on the input of narrowly defined interest groups.</p> <p>10.11 The establishment of an evaluation strategy involving a credible external evaluator which focuses on the reporting of achievements against key performance indicators and the continuous monitoring and ongoing development of strategic planning instruments.</p> <p>10.12 The organisation demonstrates leadership in being an organisation committed to development, growth and quality by establishing a quality assurance framework and by pursuing appropriate accreditation.</p>	
11. Making sure the organisation does the best it can	
<p>11.1 The new organisation demonstrates leadership in ensuring a safe and respectful organisation which values and accepts diversity and difference.</p> <p>11.2 The new organisation demonstrates leadership in promoting and safeguarding a just, ethical and socially responsible organisational culture.</p> <p>11.3 Strategies for the development and deployment of mentors, ambassadors and champions will be established as a matter of priority.</p> <p>11.4 The new organisation develops communication strategies for reaching and engaging with the many mental health consumers who will not seek to be directly involved with the new organisation and its work.</p> <p>11.5 The new organisation embeds evaluation and performance monitoring in its work to ensure it is an organisation that is constantly improving.</p>	Supported.
12. The establishment phase	

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<p>12.1 The Department of Health and Ageing engage a suitably qualified and experienced consultancy group to support the establishment of the new organisation throughout the first 18 months and ensure its ongoing viability. Emphasis be given in the first 18 months to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) establishing the organisation's identity and membership; b) developing an organisational policy framework; c) initiating the organisation's work; and d) establishing development, review and performance monitoring mechanisms. <p>12.2 An implementation plan and process be established under the initial guidance of a Reference Group appointed following a call for Expressions of Interest nationally.</p> <p>12.3 Additionally, this implementation plan and process identify an appropriate time and mechanism for transference of this oversight responsibility to an interim or inaugural Board.</p>	<p>Not supported. The Government supports an auspice arrangement for the new organisation to ensure the best possible start and chance to build solid foundations, quickly.</p> <p>The Government agrees with the proposed areas of emphasis for the first 18 months of the organisation and the importance of setting up a Consumer Reference Group to provide initial guidance and advice on an implementation plan.</p> <p>The Government intends to call nationally for expressions of interest for membership of the Consumer Reference Group early in 2012.</p> <p>The Government is giving consideration to an appropriate body to provide a solid foundation to ensure the best start for the new organisation and will make an announcement in the coming months. The Government is committed to transitioning the new organisation to full independence and following a review and report on the initial two year auspice arrangement.</p> <p>The auspice organisation will retain legal, financial and fiduciary responsibility until transition to the new organisation occurs.</p>
13. Timeframes	
<p>13.1 In the first year of the establishment phase priority be given to launching the organisation as a legal entity and commencing operations.</p>	<p>Not supported. Attention in the first year should be focused on establishing a membership base, determining work priorities, and embedding the operational framework to ensure the new organisation is established on solid foundations. Legal issues and timing should be considered during establishment phase.</p>

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14. Managing expectations and starting realistically	
<p>14.1 In the early stages of its establishment, the new organisation develops a strategy to address initial expectations.</p> <p>14.2 In its first three years priority is given by the new organisation to establishing the roles of ‘Achieving Change‘ and ‘Changing Minds’ as well as progressively building its organisational framework, culture and membership.</p>	<p>Supported. It will be important for the Consumer Reference Group to provide advice on strategies to manage initial expectations and what roles the organisation can realistically progress as it is established and in the first three years. This will become a matter for the Board’s consideration once it is elected by the membership.</p>
15. Resource requirements	
<p>15.1 Realistic and appropriate ongoing core funding be provided to invest in sound governance, to enable the appropriate employment of staff, and to enable the organisation to have a national presence and to ensure that the new organisation can carry out its primary roles and functions.</p>	<p>Noted. The Government has allocated \$4 million over five years to support the establishment of the new organisation. The Consumer Reference Group, auspice body, and Board will need to assist the new organisation to become self sustaining and financially viable.</p>