

# **Our Voice Matters**

## **Call to Action**

### **Four Corners – Don't judge us – Mental Health Consumers Not Included**

#### **28 August 2020**

On the 24th of August, ABC's Four Corners ran an episode on the relation between severe mental health issues, violent crime and the mental health system's failure to provide support to people at risk in this regard. Four Corners did not speak with mental health consumers, or mental health consumer representative organisations during the making of this show. They presented an unbalanced story which projects a message to viewers that people with mental health issues are dangerous.

Failure to include the voices of people living with mental health issues in media discussions about sensitive issues further stigmatises and dehumanises an already stigmatised group. BEING – Mental Health Consumers is disappointed that the Four Corners episode did not seek comment from BEING – Mental Health Consumers, from Consumers of Mental Health WA (COMHWA) in Western Australia, or from anyone with lived/living experience of direct acute mental health services. Improving the mental health system requires not just biomedical and carer voices, but also the voices, perspectives and experience of people who access such services. The episode reinforced a view of mental health issues which is sadly often seen in the media, that is that people living with mental issues are 'dangerous' to other people and that they are not able to represent their own experiences and views.

We call on Four Corners to focus on a feature story to include people living with mental health issues so that we can demonstrate a true and accurate lens of what living with mental health issues is like, how we are able to live meaningful and contributing lives, and are able to find hope and recovery in our lives. It is also imperative that viewers of such shows have an understanding and are properly informed that people living with mental health issues and mental distress are often victims of crime rather than the perpetrators. Many live with histories of trauma as a result of these crimes, and do not receive adequate



acknowledgement or support for their trauma histories from traditional mental health services.

#### **KEY INFORMATION**

- Mental health consumers and peak mental health bodies were not invited by Four Corners to offer an opinion in relation to violence and severe mental health issues.
- There is a lack of balance in the resulting episode entitled Don't Judge Us.
- The episode reinforced stigmatising views of people living with mental health issues.

BEING calls on Four Corners and the ABC to run another story that is inclusive of people living with mental health issues and us to share our stories. This way we are able to raise awareness that our voices matter.