

Friday, 21 May 2021

“We Need a Consumer-centric Approach”

With the NSW State Budget due to be handed down next month, BEING – Mental Health Consumers watched on with interest as the Victorian State Budget 2021-22 was released yesterday.

While the Victorian Government states that lived experience will be at the “heart of their mental health system”, we call on the NSW State Government to take a stronger stance, through more significant investment in new peer-led initiatives and by taking action to ensure the human rights of individuals are not only upheld but placed front and centre of our mental health infrastructure.

“If we are to see real change in the mental health system, an innovative and consumer-centric approach is needed” says BEING – Mental Health Consumers CEO, Irene Gallagher.

BEING – Mental Health Consumers is paving pathways through innovative projects which shine a light on peer-led initiatives. Here are some highlights from recent projects:

- BEING Supported – Mental Health Peer Support line – Findings from the evaluation of our recent BEING Supported warmline, run by peer professionals for people living with mental health issues, indicated the value of separate services not attached specifically to public mental health services as being a pathway to assisting people to recover and heal more effectively.
- BEING Suicide Support and Awareness Program – developed, run, and evaluated by peer professionals, and the broader consumer/survivor community. The preliminary evaluation indicates that people attending the groups greatly valued having the support from a peer, someone who has attempted suicide and is seeking an alternative method of support and healing to traditional clinical services.

In order to build a robust Lived Experience Workforce, we must put the necessary infrastructure in place, including supports for Peer workers. BEING – Mental Health Consumers highlights the positive impact of investment in this area and as a result of recent funding from the NSW Government for training, we have established and implemented a new model for peer supervision in NSW. More needs to be done in this space and we encourage their continued support. This will enable us to build more career pathways and provide the ongoing supports needed for this new and emerging workforce.

Of utmost importance is continued consultation with consumers and survivors of services. It is essential that Government works with peak organisations such as BEING – Mental Health Consumers and our counterparts in other states. Furthermore, the lack of consistency across the states highlights the need for a national approach to mental health systems and services, and the importance of the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance.

As we eagerly anticipate the NSW State Budget next month, we call on the NSW Government to focus on these vital areas, to ensure that consumer-led initiatives such as the BEING Supported Warmline and BEING Suicide Support and Awareness Program are not just a consideration but are the drivers of system change, healing and recovery for our community.

BEING – Mental Health Consumers is the independent, state-wide, peak organisation representing the views, perspectives and experiences of people who live with mental health issues in NSW. To learn more, visit being.org.au or call Leonie Fraser, Marketing and Communications Manager, on 1300 234 640.