



Mental Health Carers Support Hub

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Far North Queensland's Mental Health Carers Support Hub is a Pilot response to four drivers:

1. The disadvantage being experienced by carers
2. The problems with access to services
3. The evidence for integration of support services
4. The opportunities for collaboration and improvement that the Cairns and Hinterland Mental Health and ATOD's Service have offered

“ The Wellbeing of Australians – Carer Health and Wellbeing”

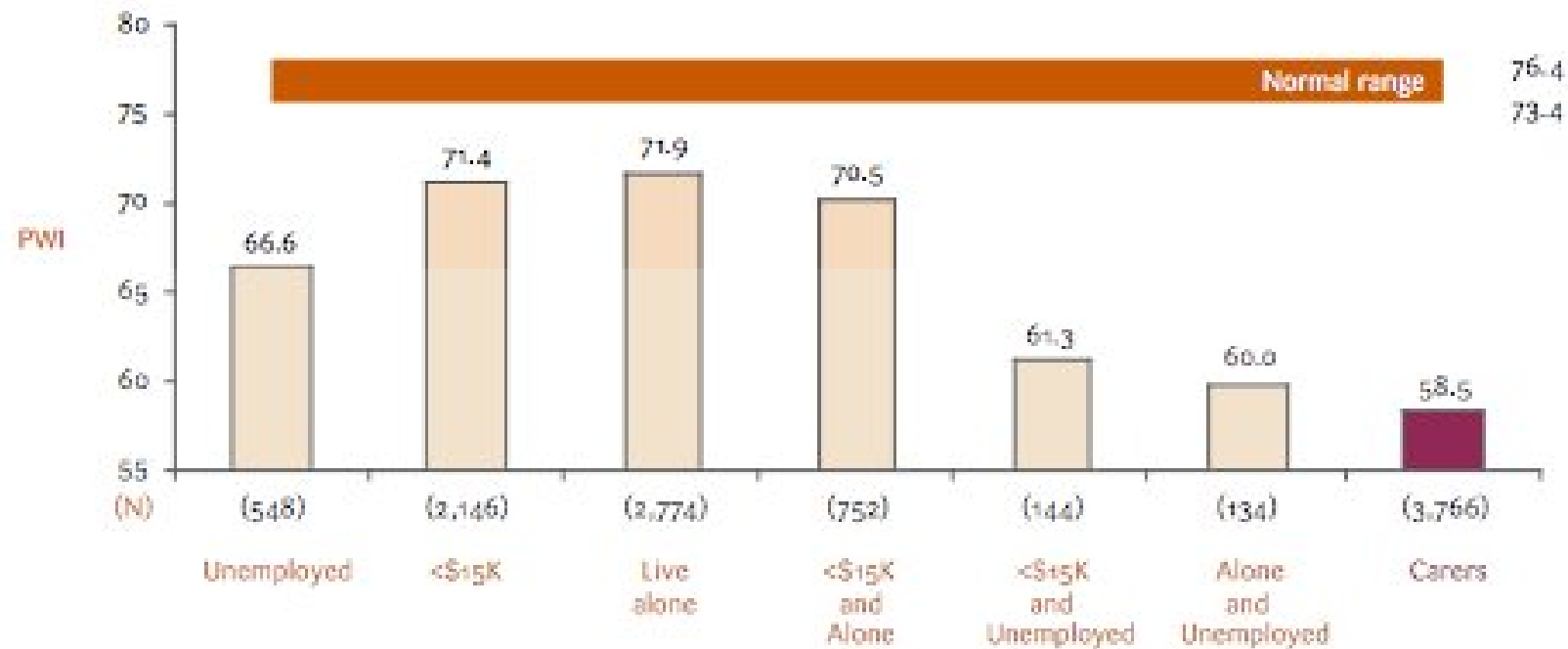


Figure 1. Carer Personal Wellbeing Index vs Other Low Wellbeing in Groups



Three Types of Impact on our carers

First Impact – just being a carer

- This research showed that carers are under a substantive burden
- More than one third of carers were found to be severely or extremely depressed
- Carers are almost twice as likely than normal to experience chronic pain
- The presence of a person in the household who requires care severely compromises the wellbeing of other family members, whether they have primary carer responsibilities or not



Second Impact – living in the Far North

- The second disadvantage is being a carer in a ‘outer regional or remote community’ ie all the communities in the Far North*
- *Carers in outer regional or remote communities reported significantly poorer health than carers in other areas*
- *The gap between carers and non-carers was also greater in these areas*
- *Carers in outer regional and remote areas of Australia have higher rates of disability or long term health problems than carers in other areas.*
- *The Tyranny of Distance? Carers in regional and remote areas of Australia, Edwards et al, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2009, p15 and 16*
- * Note: all Far North Queensland communities are classified as either “Outer Regional” or “Remote” under the measure used which is the ABS *Australian Remoteness Index Plus* (ARIA)



Third Impact – Caring for a person with Mental Illness

- The third disadvantage is the impact of caring for a person with a mental illness
- *Carers of a person with mental illness have a higher rate of common mental disorders, such as depression and anxiety, than carers of a person with a chronic physical condition*
- *The Mental Health of Australians 2 report citing data from the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*



But carers can't access services

- *“It is also very difficult to access information - you ring one Department and get passed to another Department or get told it is State or Federal or vice versa. In the end, you give up trying because, as a carer, you just don't have time to keep following things up or to do the amount of paperwork involved.” (Carer Submission to the Commonwealth House of Representatives Inquiry from the ‘Who Cares’ Report 2009)*
- *Carers living in outer regional and remote areas were the most likely to report having difficulties accessing services and difficulty understanding or being understood by service providers was a commonly cited reason....particularly in outer regional and remote areas (The Tyranny of distance? Carers in regional and remote areas of Australia , Edwards et al Australian Institute of Family Studies 2009)*



Combining supports the best approach

- *“Overall there is good evidence for multi-component interventions”
combining: information giving,*

- *counselling,*
- *respite,*
- *education,*
- *family support &*
- *support groups*

“strong evidence exists for multi-component interventions somewhere in the mix is the ‘active ingredient’”

- *(Effective Caring: a synthesis of the international evidence on carer needs and interventions
Centre for Health Service Development, University of Wollongong 2007 Pages 68 and 76)*



Hub Role

The Mental Health Carers Support Hub assists carers, families and friends of someone living with a mental illness, to access the services they require, in a supportive, family friendly manner.

This Hub has been established in collaboration with the Cairns & Hinterland Mental Health & ATOD Service and with support from a range of local Community Organisations.

The Hub is currently working in partnership with Anglicare North Queensland to develop respite opportunities for Carers of people living with a Mental Illness in Far North Queensland. It is proposed that this service will be an integral part of the Mental Health Carers Support Hub.



Mental Health Champions of the Hub

- Kevin Freele - Mental Health Executive Director
- Sam Santarossa - Mental Health Executive
- Andrew Brownlie – Nursing Director of Mental Health
- Rhonda Methven – Mental Health Police & Ambulance Educator
- Tim Shaw – Team Leader ACT (Acute Crisis Team)
- Dr Robert Pollard – Psychiatrist ACT (Acute Crisis Team)
- Jo Brown – Team Leader ATODS (Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs Service)
- Dr Alison Overland – Psychiatrist FIRRST (Far North Intensive Recovery & Rehabilitation Service Team)
- Lucy Juler – Clinical Nurse FIRRST (Far North Intensive Recovery & Rehabilitation Service Team)
- Mark Millard – Team Leader FIRRST (Far North Intensive Recovery & Rehabilitation Service Team)



Mental Health Champions of the Hub

(Cont'd)

- Dr Vega Frittelli - Psychiatrist FIRRST (Far North Intensive Recovery & Rehabilitation Service Team)
- Robert Moody - OT (Occupational Therapist) Mental Health Unit
- Vera Fitzgerald – Nurse Educator Mental Health Unit
- Anthony Sweeney – Nurse Unit Manager Mental Health Unit
- Andrea Davidson - Service Integration Co-ordinator



Hub Role

- Referral and Easy Access to other Community & Government Service Providers
- Information and Education for Carers & Service Providers
- Well Ways Program (Family – Family Education)
- Counselling
- Carer Support Group
- Development of access to Respite through partnership with Anglicare North Queensland



Hub Services Example: Well Ways Program

Peer delivered and evidence based Education for Carers

Provided in partnership with the Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre (CRCC)

Carers, Friends and Family learn:

- Ways to navigate the Mental Health System
- Information about various Mental Illnesses
- Different coping strategies, to help when someone is moving through the different cyclical stages of being “unwell” through “recovery”, “unwell”, “recovery”
- Essential communication skills which can be used even in every day life.



MENTAL HEALTH CARERS SUPPORT HUB

An Initiative of the Mental Illness Fellowship of NQ

*Caring for a loved one with a mental health problem?
Not sure where to go? Who to turn to? What to do?*

The Cairns Mental Health Carers Support Hub can guide you to the help you need within your local community.

The support you need in a way that suits you, from people who understand.

Mental Illness Fellowship of North Queensland

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