

Working Together for Mental Health – Cross Government and Cross Sector Approaches

7 August 2003

Aboriginal Issues Workshop

Aboriginal people are becoming increasingly seen as separate from mainstream society and there seems to be an assumption that when an Aboriginal person presents with an issue to a mainstream organisation that the organisation will 'pass that client on' to an Aboriginal organisation.

Great need for support of those providing services and those needing to access services.

Recommendations:

1. That mainstream organisations organize their workplaces around the fact that any funding they receive for their service is for ALL Australians, and that Aboriginal people should be included in that process.
2. Mainstream organisations should take the necessary steps to educate themselves on issues that might present when dealing with an aboriginal client.
3. Mainstream organisations need to review their employment practices and create the conditions for Aboriginal workers to be employed as mainstream workers, rather than in specific positions identified as 'Aboriginal'. It was felt that this would assist the organisation in their understanding of aboriginal mental health issues and give them more confidence to work with the Aboriginal community.
4. More funding for mental health workers in Aboriginal Medical Services and in mainstream services to educate non-Aboriginal mental health workers on cultural matters and build partnerships with survivors and mental health workers.
5. Consumer Advisory Groups to be set up all around the country and in all the Aboriginal communities to empower self-sufficiency. For example men's groups, women's groups, youth groups, healing groups but all in partnership with non-Aboriginal people.
6. Funding for Drop in Centres.
7. Prevention programs for Aboriginal people specifically to address alcoholism, gambling, suicide and drug addiction.
8. Education of the police force on Aboriginal Mental Health.