

Chairperson's Report 2009/10

The 2009/10 financial year has been both busy and challenging for AICAFMHA and the Children of Parents with a Mental Illness national initiative (COPMI Project). Uncertainty in the political arena has led to a number of organisations, including AICAFMHA, banding together to try and advocate more strongly for infant, child and adolescent mental health, as part of a whole of health agenda for children. The partnerships developed through this process need to be nurtured and maintained for the voice of children to be heard.

Our excellent reputation within the Australian Government Department of Health and Aging stood us in good stead when it came to re-negotiation of the COPMI Project contract, despite ongoing staff changes within the department. The previous agreement, covering 2007 through to June 2010 was successfully delivered upon, and a further 2 years funding has been committed. During this time, we can expect to see resources developed to support fathers, families and workforce through a range of modalities. The research and evidence aspects of the project will also be continued, along with distribution of the existing resources for workers and families.

During the period from January 10 to June 10, the majority of the COPMI Project staff left to pursue other professional interests. A re-arrangement of the positions within the COPMI Project has occurred and I am pleased to advise that the extensive recruitment process undertaken has resulted in successful filling of all the COPMI positions required to progress this new phase of the national initiative.

Ms Elizabeth Fudge, the COPMI Project Manager, has maintained her positive attitude and commitment to furthering the cause for children of parents with a mental illness, despite the obvious challenges of contract negotiations and a changeover of staff. I commend her for her work on this initiative and thank her for her passion and drive in ensuring project deliverables are achieved to a very high standard.

Activity relating to the National Youth Participation Strategy is all but completed. There are still comfortable numbers of the hard copy report and factsheets available, however online ordering is slow. There is a lesson in this for AICAFMHA with regard to time delays and print publishing of project reports.

Production of the AICAFMHA e-letter, News In Brief continued from the AICAFMHA office with 9 issues circulated this financial year (4 in the second half of 2009 and 5 in the first half of 2010). It is anticipated that the 'near monthly' circulation of the newsletter will continue, as feedback remains positive and subscriber numbers remain steady at around 2100.

The AICAFMHA website continues to attract an average of 10 500 visitors each month, with a peak of 17 000 visitors in October when we held our conference. The most frequently accessed areas of the site continue to be the e-letter and archives, news and resources.

In October 2009, AICAMFHA hosted the 6th National CAMH Conference concurrently with the Inaugural World COPMI Conference, in Adelaide. Both events presented strong programs and attracted substantial delegate numbers, despite the challenging financial circumstances of the time. In total, 408 delegates and speakers participated across the two events, resulting in a successful and well sized event. The inclusion of a joint registration for delegates wishing to attend both forums was well received, with a quarter of delegates taking up this option. The post-conference day of workshops was also well patronized. Over the three days, the joint events managed to make a modest profit. My thanks, to both conference organising committees and to SAPMEA, the conference organisers, for all of their support and commitment leading up to and during this event.

AICAFMHA continues to be represented on the Mental Health Council of Australia's National Policy Forum. Thanks to Merrie Carling who continues to advocate for infants, children and adolescent mental health issues on behalf of AICAFMHA.

The core membership of the AICAFMHA Board has remained stable during the past 12 months. Dr Scott Harden, who joined us from Queensland in October 2008 resigned in November 2009. The Queensland position, and the Northern Territory position, remains vacant. Through the past 12 months, the board has maintained its bimonthly meetings with the welcome participation of all board members. I would like to express my appreciation to all AICAFMHA directors for their ongoing support of the association and myself as Chair.

Again, I would like to thank the AICAFMHA Company Secretary Ms Sue Woodard, and COPMI Project Manager Ms Elizabeth Fudge, for their efforts in meeting project requirements, support of the association and contributions to infant, child and adolescent mental health issues addressed by AICAFMHA.

Finally, I would also like to thank all of the supporters of AICAFMHA and subscribers for their participation in discussion, feedback and comments of encouragement. We value their comments and feedback on the direction and activities of the association and look forward to their continued support in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Phil Robinson, PSM
Chair, AICAFMHA Board of Directors