mental health
community coalition ACT Inc.

RECOVERY COLLEGE PROJECT
REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS ON CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS

3 July 2017

Three stakeholder co-design workshops were held (Tuesday 30, Wednesday 31 May, Saturday 3 June) to begin the co-design process towards a Recovery College in Canberra. Approximately **80** people in total participated. Not all participants signed in, and not all identified their 'role'. Those who did identify comprised the following:

- consumers and carers – **23**
- MH students / consumers – **11**
- professionals / consumers – **1**
- researchers/academics/consumers – **2**
- educator/consumer – **3**
- educators – **2**
- professionals (clinicians, case managers, support workers, other MH sector workers, government staff) – **25**

This indicates that (based just on those who identified their role):

- people with lived experience comprised at least **50%** of the attendance (**40** identified)
- professionals working in the MH system comprised **31%** of the total attendance (**26** identified)
- people engaged in the education system (students and educators) comprised **20%** of the total attendance (**16** identified. Note: most of these also identified as consumers).

KEY LEARNINGS

- There is strong interest and support amongst the mental health sector, including consumers, for having a recovery college in Canberra.
- The concept of co-design could be better understood and we need more engagement with stakeholders on the topic.
- There is strong interest in having a large number of topics for courses – far more than we can accommodate. We will need to have careful and considerate engagement with stakeholders about this, through the working groups to be established in August.
- There is a big desire for courses, groups and activities to enable 'social' opportunities. This is also something we will need to negotiate carefully with stakeholders as it will not be possible to provide all of these. We are considering possible ways to accommodate this in a separate project.

WORKING GROUPS

The next stage of the process will be to form working groups on specific topics, to progress the concepts and ideas towards actionable plans. It is envisaged that these groups will commence in August, with a combined workshop to establish goals and guidelines for operating as co-design groups.

Twenty-nine workshop participants signed up to join a working group to continue the co-design of the Recovery College Project. Many opted to join more than one working group. The numbers for the working groups are:

- curriculum / courses – **22**
- college location, facilities – **6**
- student services – **8**
- policies, procedures and principles – **11**
- co-design (how we engage) – **15**

EDUCATOR INTEREST

We also asked for people to register if they were potentially interested in becoming educators with the college. Twenty-seven participants expressed interest in training. These people will be invited to attend the combined co-design session preceding the workshops. Training for educators is expected to commence later in the year.

FEEDBACK

The workshops were highly successful, reflecting the strong interest and support for a Recovery College amongst mental health professionals, educators, and consumers and carers.

Feedback forms indicate that **89%** of attendees 'gained a good understanding of what a Recovery College is' and **82%** 'found the workshop useful'.

However only **58%** said they 'gained a good understanding of co-design', indicating that we need to foster greater stakeholder engagement in this area, providing training and opportunities for exploration and learning.

Comments (anonymous) on the feedback sheets were primarily positive, including statements such as:

- 'We need to keep pushing to ensure this happens.'
- 'This is so exciting!'
- 'The project will be a great benefit and fills a gap in mental health services in the ACT.'
- 'Let's do it!'
- 'First positive workshop / idea in mental health sector. Thank you!'
- 'What a radical, inspiring model this is – may be the best thing to happen in the world of mental health for decades.'

Comments from participants during the workshops included:

General
- 'speakers wearing a number of hats, inspiring to see this'
- 'Telling strangers an intimate part of your life, so empowering to do this'
- 'telling your story is a way to normalise it'
- There was a suggestion of changing names from educators to facilitators, courses to workshops or seminars. Living experience professional rather than consumer

On recovery
- 'recovery is open ended, up and down, but more than possible'
- 'recovery is constant, a lifestyle. You need to incorporate it into what you do'
- 'some people who are not at the stage of a diagnosis, but sub-acute, can benefit from a recovery college'
- 'Engaging early can help some people head off – early intervention'
- 'Recovery is a really complex concept, different meanings for different people'
- 'people will not be cured by the courses'
- 'helping people to own their illness – take responsibility'

On co-design
- Need to realise the difference between the words – consultation, collaboration, co-design
- 'if you develop the program before you go to the community you limit their ideas. Co-design broadens this out.'
- 'need to make sure that people who only have one hat are acknowledged and used in the process'
- 'peer workers need to be acknowledged'.

OUTCOMES FROM GROUP DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. POTENTIAL COURSES

BACKGROUND

In planning of the initial stakeholder workshops; an informed starting base was established from researching what other international and Australian mental health recovery colleges offer as their curriculum. In documenting the curriculums, we identified that the course offering could be broken down into the following four groupings that would support people through their experiences of mental ill health:

- **Health matters** – dealing with aspects of mental ill health, especially how we can gain an understanding of and manage living with it.
- **Life matters** – safely navigating our way through the complexities of living in a community and supporting our relationships with all.
- **Caring matters** – supporting carers through learning, services and connection with each other.
- **Work matters** – how we can safely find a way back through education and support to work in fulfilling and meaningful roles in our community.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Workshop participants formed groups to discuss what they would like to learn and what has worked in their own lives. The following subjects were suggested.

HEALTH MATTERS

Managing our health

- anxiety
- depression
- bipolar disorder
- obsessive compulsive disorder
- anger management
- dual-diagnosis (mental illness with alcohol or other drug problems)
- co-morbidity (more than one diagnosis)
- understanding psychosis
- post-traumatic stress
- understanding my medications
- therapeutic approaches – what are the different types of therapy (e.g. CBT, EMDR, ACT etc.)
- mental health first aid
- safety planning (my wellness plan, advanced care directives etc.)

Managing relationships with services

- what to expect when I engage with a service
- how do I create a good relationship with my support team?
- how will I represent myself to mental health professionals?
- navigating the mental health system in the ACT, including the NDIS
- how to exit services.

LIFE MATTERS

- self-care (diet and nutrition, exercise, adequate and regular sleep, enjoyable activity, good relationships and community)
- because we're worth it! (developing our self-esteem and self-worth)
- giving back (the value of helping others)
- meditation
- mindfulness
- motivation
- communication skills
- get creative (overall health and wellbeing benefits of creativity, pointing to activities in the ACT where participants can engage)
- assertiveness and self-consciousness
- telling my story
- resilience – managing relapses and setbacks
- 'but you don't look sick'
- self-advocacy
- systemic advocacy

CARING MATTERS

- how to be the best care giver I can be
- seniors and older persons' rights and sense of community
- sharing 'our' story
- advocacy
- vicarious trauma and self-care
- understanding the person I am caring for

WORK MATTERS

- what does work mean to me?
- what do I need to do to get back to work?
- action planning and goal setting
- returning to learning/education
- my work identity – strengths and career choices
- safety planning for work (my wellness plan, advanced care directives, etc.)
- accessing vocational training and skills
- mental health in the workplace

2. STUDENT NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Workshop participants formed groups to discuss what they would need and expect as students, and what would make the College as accessible and engaging as possible. The following were suggested.

ETHOS

- needs to be approachable to all walks of life and feel safe
- Make *it community* based (not just consumers)
- Must be able to trust the College
- culturally safe and inclusive.
- 360-degree feedback
- It should be fun
- no fees
- no exams
- no essays
- Invite, create, nurture and maintain curiosity in learning and skills.

MODES OF DELIVERY AND LEARNING

- online learning
- virtual environment and dignity of risk practice (requires balance due to risk of loneliness, limited support and isolation)
- ability to access any issues in safe places.
- lounge area and internet café – a place to just be 'me'
- cloud IT environment
- classrooms
- supported learning.
- outreach – language, CALD, ESL
- flexibility
- Use of smartphone and software applications
- Use social media and Skype to open up to those who can't travel or leave home, and to open to people who don't know if they need it yet.
- Peer support to assist and escort to, at and from courses.

LOCATION, FACILITIES, CLASSROOMS, COMMUNICATION DESIGN

- communal space to drop in – couches/kitchen/tea and coffee
- virtual chat room
- adequately resourced
- localised, park, community gardens
- accessible, non-threatening
- multiple locations
- culturally appropriate

- safe spaces
- private areas – study spaces.
- flexibility – hours and days
- clubs – e.g. job club
- student board
- generic suggestion/conversation box - dedicated email address for ideas
- information on rights and responsibilities

STUDENT SUPPORT

- welfare officers / peer support workers
- buddy system
- mentors
- tutoring
- online support
- individualised learning plans
- links to services
- celebrations – attainment, graduation etc.
- childcare

EXPECTATIONS OF STUDYING

- accreditation for courses
- career pathway – lead to further study e.g. CIT
- quality assurance – standards
- leaders – peer educators
- training aids – participatory, supportive, understanding/understood
- trained teachers – support with services
- work experience – transition
- scholarships
- volunteer work

3. EDUCATORS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

WORKSHOP OUTOMES

Workshop participants formed groups to discuss what they would need and expect as potential educators, and how to achieve teaching and learning styles that could make the College most beneficial. The following were suggested.

HOW SHOULD WE EDUCATE

- principles of adult learning embedded in the philosophy of learning
- trained educators delivering various course at various times
- educators and the students who have lived experience will work hand in hand comfortably.
- well developed, co-designed curriculum and course material, as well as training in specific course delivery
- ongoing monitoring
- person centred approach
- six monthly evaluation
- objectives for every course
- do not commercialise the education
- not lectures (have a manageable class size for interaction, 10 – 20 pupils depending on subject)
- do not be counsellors or rescuers
- individual learning plans should be continuous and ongoing in co-design (needs based analysis is informing curriculum and continuous improvement)
- variety of settings and styles – classroom, discussion groups, hands on
- participatory self-advocacy exercises
- mentoring and coaching.
- online forums/applications/Skype/distance learning
- individual forums for participants of specific groups
- flexibility
- offer both intensive short course and longer term learning
- build links for capabilities to be harnessed through existing community groups (e.g. for communication)
- extend education to students without mental illness
- tangible projects as a learning tool (learning: planning, time management, social skills, podcasts, web development, revegetation, art, etc.
- carer education, info based and hands on sessions
- liaise with national and international recovery colleges (via Skype sessions, ask for design input)
- debates on (strategies/info) that students can witness to see that most issues have a variety of solutions.

WHAT DO EDUCATORS NEED?

- an understood College philosophy and values
- inclusive and respectful workplace
- all staff working on the same footing

- recruitment of professionals, clinicians, and non-consumers is also vital for the growth of the organisation
- facilitation skills training
- learn how to keep people engaged
- feedback from participants
- coaching from supervisors/peers/mentor/coach
- educators forum/social group/Facebook (or similar) group
- opportunities to celebrate achievements
- strategies to manage anxiety (co-facilitation for new/ less confident educators)
- centralised resources for students as well as educators
- mentoring/networking with existing recovery college educators
- developed career path (opportunities for growth/recognition)
- educator resource support (logistics, scheduling, IT, office supplies, enrolment, education material etc…)
- holidays
- childcare
- flexible working hours
- WHS policies for staff/students (wellbeing)
- strategies for managing fluctuating levels of wellness in staff and educators
- clear and agreed values and rules for class (and wider workplace) e.g. mission statement
- access to course evaluation, feedback and development (continuous quality improvement)

LOCATIONS

- outdoors
- excursions
- classrooms
- evidence-based supported applications and social media

4. CO-DESIGN

WORKSHOP OUTOMES

Workshop participants formed groups to discuss co-design and its application in developing the College. Co-design will shape all aspects of the College and needs to be clearly understood and carefully undertaken. Many participants expressed a desire for further training and clarity in this area. The following reflects discussions at the workshops.

CO-DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATION

- equality – everyone's contribution is equally valid and important.
- inclusion – no one is invisible
- respect
- appropriate language and attitude – we don't talk down to anyone
- consumers are experts in their own lives
- enable the dignity of risk.

SOME GROUND RULES FOR CO-DESIGN

- we approach all tasks with good will and positive intent
- we need to develop a code of conduct (or relationship guidelines)
- need to ensure everyone understands the principles of the College
- everyone's experience (personal and professional) is respected and valued
- everyone's views are heard and respected.
- all educators should experience the same training
- continuous reflective practice should be embedded
- we recognise that most people wear more than one 'hat' in the process (e.g. professional *and* consumer or lived experience)
- take a partnership approaches in governance/recruitment/training using structures and processes that make it work.

CO-DESIGN AND COMMUNICATION

- processes must be clear
- co-design needs to be well understood
- need feedback mechanisms
- strive to build capacity
- use continuous reflective practice
- co-design needs to be seen in action and understood by all
- we need to embrace different communication approaches