



FAIRNESS IN MENTAL HEALTH



PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Introduction to the Community Visitor Program
- Brief Policy Background
- Issues in the Territory
 - Police Transport to Hospital
 - Accommodation for people with complex needs
- General Discussion



COMMUNITY VISITOR PROGRAM

- Established pursuant to Part 14 of the *Mental Health & Related Services Act (NT) 1998* (the Act)
- Complaints and Advocacy service for people receiving treatment under the Act and persons with a “genuine interest” in the person receiving treatment
- Monitoring and Inspection of mental health services



COMMUNITY VISITOR PROGRAM

- Community visitors
 - Complaints and advocacy
 - Inspection – seclusion & complaints registers
 - Visiting
- Community visitors panels
 - Six monthly visits to the approved treatment facilities



Policy Background

- Need to strike a balance between the right to self determination and the community's right to safety and the obligation to protect from harm
- **Principle of the Least Restrictive Alternative**
 - Balances rights and obligations
 - Achieves the state's end by the most narrow means



LEAST RESTRICTIVE ALTERNATIVE

Least restrictive, least intrusive treatment in the least restrictive environment

- Voluntary treatment - involuntary treatment
- Closed ward - open ward
- Treatments
 - Counselling – Medication – Other (eg ECT)
- Hospital - home



LEAST RESTRICTIVE ALTERNATIVE

Whether an intervention takes place in accordance with the least restrictive alternative depends on the situation and the person in the situation



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Accommodation and Support for People with Complex Needs

Issue

In Alice Springs in 2006 – 2007 Financial Year, 20% bed space in the 8 bed Unit was used to support people with dual disability who had recovered from an acute phase of mental illness, but who could not access alternative accommodation due to their support needs



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Accommodation and Support for People with Complex Needs

Issue

In the past two years, three separate people have been inpatient in the Mental Health Unit for longer than 9 months.



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Accommodation and Support for People with Complex Needs

Issue

- More restrictive environment
- Problems with absconding \Rightarrow seclusion
- High level of institutionalisation
- Impact on other clients
 - Numbers in the Unit
 - Unit locked



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Accommodation and Support for People with Complex Needs

Barriers to Resolution

- Cost of alternative secure facility
- Insufficient community accommodation
- Difficulties with
 - Funding
 - Recruitment and retention of staff



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Accommodation and Support for People with Complex Needs

Ways Forward to a Fairer, More Inclusive, Less Restrictive System

- Panel investigation and comment – Alice Springs
- Role of Alice Springs community
 - NTCOSS/NT Shelter
 - Mental Health Association of Central Australia



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Police Transport to Hospital

Issue

- Routine transport to hospital by police
- Transport in the cage of the police vehicle



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Police Transport to Hospital

Issue

- More restrictive than transport to hospital by family, mental health staff or ambulance
- Breach of the right to be treated with dignity and respect – neighbours
- Safety implications of transport in the cage



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Police Transport to Hospital

Issue

- S10 (b) of the Act provides:

Where the person needs to be taken to an approved treatment facility or into custody for assessment, the assistance of a member of the Police Force is to be sought only as a last resort and there is no other means of taking the person to the approved treatment facility or into custody;



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Police Transport to Hospital

Barriers to change

- Culture
- Lack of alternatives



ISSUES IN THE TERRITORY

Police Transport to Hospital

Ways Forward to a Fairer, More Inclusive, Less Restrictive System

- National Transport Principles
- Changing culture
 - Consumers and their families
 - Police and Mental Health staff
 - Community organisations



General Discussion

Over to you

And thankyou

