

Mental health issues tackled with new online resource

17 June 2016

The first research-based online resource in Australia to present the lived experiences of people diagnosed with severe mental health problems was launched on 16 June by the Hon Steve Dimopoulos MP, State Member for Oakleigh, and Chair of the Mental Health Expert Taskforce.

The Monash University-led, multi-media resource presents the experiences of [people living with severe mental health problems](#) and the experiences of [family carers](#). Supporting people experiencing severe [mental health problems](#), changing community attitudes towards mental health and mental illnesses and informing healthcare practitioners and policy makers are key goals. The resource also aims to contribute to improving services, reflecting obligations under international human rights law to provide access by people with disabilities to the support they may require in making decisions about their healthcare and other aspects of their lives. Recent laws such as Victoria's Mental Health Act 2014, also now recognise that those receiving mental health services should be involved in all decisions about their assessment, [treatment](#) and recovery.

Based on a three-year study, the resource features filmed and audio-recorded interviews with 60 people from urban and regional Victoria. The desire for clearer communication about diagnoses and medication and the importance of welcoming environments and good quality relationships for supporting decision making featured as clear themes in many of the interviews.

Associate Professor Renata Kokanovic of Monash University, who led the research, said the online resource provides a forum unique in Australia for assisting members of the general public, [mental health professionals](#) and policy makers to gain an understanding of what it really means to support the decision making of people experiencing severe mental illnesses and their family carers.

"Many people talked about their experiences of using [mental health services](#), the challenges they faced around making treatment and life decisions, and personal recovery. Giving space for people to tell their stories and listening to other people's stories can help empower people diagnosed with severe mental health problems and family carers. We hope this research contributes to reducing the anxiety and social isolation that people diagnosed with mental illness and their carers often feel," Associate Professor Kokanovic said.

"Raising awareness that responsibility lies with the community as a whole and ensuring governments move appropriately towards meeting international legal obligations is critical for safeguarding the rights of people diagnosed with mental illness."

The online resource on [lived experiences of people diagnosed with severe mental health problems](#) and family carers is now live and accessible to the public.

Professor Helen Herrman from Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health and The University of Melbourne, and President Elect of the World Psychiatric Association described this as an invaluable resource.

"It raises community and professional awareness of the common ground and the human dignity and respect at the heart of all [decision making](#) for people living with [mental ill health](#) and their families," Professor Herrman said.

Indigo Daya, Melbourne-based mental health consumer writer and speaker, said she had hope for the way the online resource could be used by people affected by mental health problems to enhance their lives, and by mental health practitioners to enhance their practice.

"If you're someone who has your own experience of mental [health problems](#), this is a space where you

can explore other ways that [people](#) have made their own decisions and faced their own challenges in expressing their decisions or having them honoured. If you work in [mental health](#), this is a space where you can reflect on your practice and ways that you can bring about change," Ms Daya said.

Provided by Monash University

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