



## CMHDARN SYMPOSIUM 2018

On 20 June 2018, the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) held a one-day Symposium in Sydney. The event provided an opportunity to hear from people with lived experience, service providers, academics as well as new and established researchers in the mental health and alcohol and other drugs fields.

The NSW Mental Health Commissioner Catherine Lourey gave the opening address in which she expressed the Commission's support for the Network. Ms Lourey highlighted the importance of collaboration, identifying CMHDARN as an important focus for the Commission's work to foster partnerships and integration across the two sectors. Demonstrating this intention, the Commissioner drew attention to a further seeding grant opportunity, [open until 9 July](#).

The three distinguished researchers provided keynote presentations. Dr Mindy Sotiri from the Community Restorative Centre spoke about the management of critical transition points between prison and the community, emphasising the importance of pre-release engagement as a critical bridge that can dramatically minimise the risk of re-offending. Associate Professor Kylie Valentine from the Social Policy Research Centre UNSW, shared the importance of inclusive language with a focus on the person and not the impairment. A trauma-informed strength-based approach was recommended, as was the need, particularly in child protection to consider a child in the context of the family. Issues of language emerged as an important theme of the day, which highlighted the importance of two recently released language guides from both [NADA](#) and [MHCC](#). Dr Steph Kershaw from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre provided an overview of the *Cracks in the Ice* toolkit, an interactive online resource developed to provide evidence-based information and resources about ice for the Australian community.

A key purpose of the day was to consult with participants to garner their views on strategic directions for CMHDARN, and identify priorities for building research capacity. Attendees were asked how the sectors might better conduct cross-sectoral research and enhance collaboration for the benefit of consumers. The Symposium and consultation was facilitated by David McGrath, an independent consultant with extensive experience and understanding of the cross sectoral issues. The feedback from the consultation workshop will inform the development of future directions for CMHDARN.

A brief snapshot of CMHDARN Research Seeding Grants recipients' projects in 2017-2018 provided a fascinating insight into research outcomes in the CMO sector. Recipients described their process, including methodology, partnerships and outcomes, as well as sharing experiences of conducting research in their organisations. They all identified co-design and participation of people with lived experience as integral to best outcomes. These presentations clearly demonstrated the value of research into practice conducted in the two sectors, and the importance of supporting these activities through seeding grants and mentoring programs. Several projects have demonstrated the potential to be developed further through other funding sources. A more detailed report on the seeding grants is in development and will be made available on the [CMHDARN website](#).

The CMHDARN network thank all who presented and attended the event for their generous participation and enthusiasm, which made the day especially memorable.

