



## **Board President welcomes publication of the "Lacking Insight" report**

Board President, John Lesser, said today: "I welcome the publication of the Mental Health Legal Centre's 'Lacking Insight' report of their research project on involuntary patient experience of the Board".

Former Board President, now Victorian Law Reform Commissioner, Professor Neil Rees, launched the report on 27 November 2008 at the Centre's AGM. The Centre provides legal advice and representation services to involuntary patients on community treatment orders appearing before the Board.

"The Board supported the Centre's research project through every stage, and the report provides an important subjective perspective that will assist the Board, and individual members, to better understand how its work impacts on those most affected by involuntary treatment for a serious mental illness," Mr Lesser noted.

The President observed that "the Board has always been aware of the importance of constantly reviewing and, where necessary, initiating innovations and changes to practices and procedures to achieve its statutory functions in as effective, efficient and pro-therapeutic manner as it can. This process will continue, and the report will assist in that endeavour."

In furthering its commitment to "best practice" hearing processes, the Board is an active co-partner in a major, broad-ranging three-year research project funded by the Australian Research Council which, it is anticipated, will provide an objective cross-jurisdictional analysis of three Australian mental health tribunals, including the Board, with a comprehensive report due in the second half of 2009.

There is no surprise that, in undertaking a fundamental decision-making role in relation to the involuntary or compulsory treatment of people with a serious mental illness, the Board is not universally popular, particularly among involuntary patients.

It is noteworthy that many of the issues and concerns raised in the report are as much about the philosophical background, current legislative framework and service delivery practices around involuntary psychiatric treatment and care as about the Board's role in conducting review and appeal hearings per se. Many of these matters are currently under active consideration as part of the Victorian government's "whole of government" mental health strategy, "Because Mental Health Matters" and a review of the *Mental Health Act 1986*.

The Board will be an active participant in the stakeholder consultation process as part of the Mental Health Act review, and congratulates the Mental Health Legal Centre for its important contribution to the debate about how best to achieve the government's aims and objectives in providing a world-class, human rights-compliant mental health treatment and review system.

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