

MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE JOB DESCRIPTION AND WORK RELATED REQUIREMENTS

- Position title:** Mental Health Advocate
- Employment Instrument:** Engaged by the Chief Mental Health Advocate under a contract for services pursuant to s350 of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. See *Terms and Conditions of Engagement of Mental Health Advocates* attached.
- Role of MHAS:** The Mental Health Advocacy Service (MHAS) is established by the Chief Mental Health Advocate (Chief Advocate).
Part 20 of the *Mental Health Act 2014* sets out the functions and powers of the Chief Advocate and Mental Health Advocates.
In summary the role of MHAS is to provide advocacy and rights protection for:
- people who are subject to involuntary mental health treatment orders, people who have been referred for examination by a psychiatrist, some voluntary mental health patients, and residents of psychiatric hostels (identified persons); and
 - residents of a declared place (the Bennett Brook Disability Justice Centre) pursuant to the *Declared Places (Mentally Impaired Accused) Act 2015*
- to ensure their voices are heard.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

Reports to: Senior Mental Health Advocate (Senior Advocate)

Positions reporting to Mental Health Advocates: Nil but Mental Health Advocates may be appointed as an acting Senior Advocate from time to time.

MHAS VALUES

- Empowerment of consumers and “pure advocacy”
- Respect for people’s rights, dignity, culture and diversity
- A person-centred, recovery focussed and holistic approach
- Working together and supporting each other
- Integrity, transparency and accountability
- Ongoing improvement

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES OF ROLE

The role of Mental Health Advocates is to ensure that identified persons have:

- their rights protected;
- access to services;
- their voices heard at both an individual and systemic level;
- sufficient and appropriate services available and those services do not adversely impact on their health, safety or welfare.

STATEMENT OF DUTIES OF MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

The Mental Health Advocate duties are set out in Part 20 of the Act, in particular sections 352, 357 and 363 and include:

1. visiting or otherwise contacting identified persons within 7 days of them being made involuntary or 48 hours after requesting contact as allocated by MHAS;
2. inquiring into or investigating any matter relating to the conditions of mental health services where identified persons are detained or treated and cared for that is adversely affecting, or is likely to adversely affect the health, safety or wellbeing of identified persons
3. inquiring into or investigating the extent to which identified persons have been informed by mental health services of their rights , the extent to which those rights have been observed and assisting them to protect and enforce their rights under the Act including access to legal services;
4. inquiring into and seeking to resolve complaints made by identified persons about their detention treatment or care by mental health services including applications and representation to the Health and Disabilities Services Complaints Office;
5. advocating for and facilitating access by identified persons to other services, in consultation with the medical practitioners and mental health practitioners responsible for their treatment and care;
6. attempting to resolve issues by dealing directly with the relevant staff members of the mental health service concerned and/or referring issues to the Senior Advocate or the Chief Advocate;
7. drafting letters reports and briefing notes or assisting the Senior Advocates or Chief Advocate to draft letters, reports and briefing notes relating to issues involving identified persons, including contributing to the MHAS Annual Report laid before Parliament;
8. preparing and/or conducting training and other presentations about the role and powers of mental health advocates;
9. attending mental health service management and other meetings relating to mental health or other services with or on behalf of the Senior Advocate or Chief Advocate;
10. representing the Chief Advocate / MHAS at forums, conferences and seminars; and
11. occasional weekend/on call roster work dealing with phone messages from identified persons.

WORK-RELATED REQUIREMENTS FOR APPOINTMENT AS MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

The following work-related requirements are assessed for suitability in the context of the services to be provided by Mental Health Advocates.

1. **Knowledge of, and/or experience dealing with, mental health issues and contemporary concepts and a strong commitment to human rights.** This could be through the applicant's lived experience, work experience, training and/or other studies.

2. **High level communication and interpersonal skills, including the ability to engage with people from all walks of life.** Applicants should highlight their knowledge, understanding, skills and experience in interviewing, engaging with and presenting information (both verbal and written) tailored to suit different audiences, including people from different age groups, people with Aboriginal and / or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, sexuality and gender diverse individuals and individuals at different stages of their recovery journey.

3. **High level advocacy, negotiation and investigative skills in a range of situations.** This may include investigation reports and analytical and problem solving skills as well as the ability to make oral submissions to a legal tribunal.

4. **Good letter and report writing skills.** These are important skills in ensuring that written advocacy work is clear, complete and persuasive. Written submissions and investigation reports may need to be provided to legal tribunals and other agencies.

5. **Good organisational and time management skills to work effectively both independently and as part of a team.** Applicants will need to work independently taking responsibility for, and managing their work, to effectively prioritise and meet expected performance deadlines and outcomes with the direction, support and guidance of the Chief Advocate, Senior Advocates or other delegate.

6. **Good computer skills.** Includes the ability to use the internet, email, smart phone, databases and case management systems. Mental Health Advocates are required to enter reports on all consumer contacts into a case management system and instructions and work tasks are provided on a dashboard which they need to access and check regularly while working in the field.

7. **Strong commitment to working ethically with integrity, professionalism and commitment.** Includes complying with the standards and protocols set by the Chief Advocate, Senior Advocates or other delegate.