

# Mental Health Research Priorities in Australia: A Consumer and Carer Agenda

Banfield et al. (2018)

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## For which topic were research priorities identified?

mental health

## In which location was the research priority setting conducted?

Australia - Australia

## Why was it conducted at all?

The perspectives of mental health consumers and carers are increasingly recognised as important to the development and conduct of research. However, research directions are still most commonly developed without consumer and carer input.

## What was the objective?

to establish priorities for mental health research driven by the views of consumers and carers in Australia

## What was the outcome?

a ranking list of 79 research topics

## How long did the research prioritization take?

November 2013: discussion forum. September 2017 - October 2017: survey

## Which methods were used to identify research priorities?

group discussion; survey

## How were the priorities for research identified exactly?

Step 1: A face-to-face discussion forum consisting of small group discussions of 6-8 participants each was held. Participants were asked to nominate and discuss research gaps. To identify priorities for research based on the collected gaps, a dot-mocracy process was applied: Each participant was provided with five colored, adhesive dots. The color of the dot indicated which group the participant belonged to (consumers, carers, or people who identified as both). Each dot represented one vote. Participants were free to distribute their dots across as many or few topics as they wished. The available 120 votes were broadly distributed across 59 of the 79 topics.

Step 2: A survey was conducted. The survey contained the 79 research topics that were identified during the small group discussions. The 79 research topics were presented along 14 broad thematic areas. Participants were asked to rate the priority of each of the 87 research topics on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very low priority to 5 = very high priority). All items an individual participant rated as of very high priority were collated. Participants were then asked to rate all items they designated as high priority in order of relative priority using a 'drag and drop' process. Participants were also invited to suggest new research topics or provide comments in open-ended questions at the end of each theme and after the ranking exercise. Feedback provided in the comments section indicated that the ranking process proved too difficult for most participants, raising serious concerns about the validity of the relative rankings. Results are therefore restricted to analysis of the ratings data.

## Which stakeholders took part?

Group discussion: A total of 25 people (17 female, 8 male) with lived experience as a consumer and/or carer attended the forum. Survey: A total of 70 consumers and/or carers participated in the online survey, including 37 consumers, 12 carers and 21 consumer/carers.

## How were stakeholders recruited?

Participants for the group discussions were recruited via advertisements distributed through the mailing lists of ACT (Australian Capital Territory) consumer and carer networks. Advertisements were also emailed to ACT members of the Depression and Anxiety Consumer Research Unit Register, a database of people who have expressed an interest in research conducted at the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research (CMHR). To recruit participants for the online survey, advertisement targets used for the discussion forum were expanded to include both national and state-based health consumer and carer organizations. Advertisements were also disseminated through the Lived Experience Research register (a database of consumers and carers who have expressed interest in participating in ACACIA research), the CMHR website and the CMHR social media accounts. Recruitment flyers were distributed at community events during National Mental Health Week. Survey participants were required to be at least 18 years old and live in Australia.

## Were stakeholders actively involved or did they just participate?

Stakeholders were mere participants of the research prioritization process; they were not actively involved in the