

IS MISERY A COMMODITY???

Uncertainty about future funding places pressure on organisations and impacts on the services we are able to deliver. Greater security of funding would assist CC ARAFMI as it struggles to better meet unmet demand. We need governments to recognise the value of our expertise in our local mental health community, and the contribution we have made over the last 36 years.

The expertise and knowledge developed over many decades by staff, carers, families and people with the lived experience of mental illness has pushed the barrow of person centred thinking, recovery language and no wrong door approach, long before it became fashionable.

Grass roots organisations have the expertise to design, deliver and adapt services based on local knowledge and local perspective and are able to adapt when necessary to meet local need, without always responding to the flavour of the month, and then changing to fit that, rather than what the real experts, families affected by mental illness, are telling us.

It is vitally important that we acknowledge, the value of local innovation and the ability of NGOs to be flexible and responsive to the stated needs of its community, let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

If we introduce approaches that seek to constrict or exclude NGOs, their role in the community will be sadly diminished

or extinct and we will miss out on tapping the marvellous potential contribution they make. Or worse still, they'll simply take on the practices and behaviours of the government departments and agencies.

Grass roots NGO involvement in mental health has changed the face of the mental health service system, it's cheap to run, consumer focused, community-based and has a whole of life response to people's mental health needs. This can be undermined by the shift from submission-based grants to a market-based approach and leave questions about motivation and behaviour unanswered.

Although community organisations have common goals, in the past competition around funding has led to distrust and bidding wars for resources, with the bigger organisations overshadowing the little ones, decreasing diversity and the long established well respected small not for profit organisation suddenly becomes the square peg in the round hole and accused of duplication and an unnecessary extra, the Pac Man mentality.