# New Chief Mental Health Advocate

Dr Sarah Pollock is the new Chief Mental Health Advocate in Western Australia. Prior to taking up the role of Chief Advocate, Sarah was seconded as Special Advisor to the Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System. This work focussed on leading the development and drafting of the chapters relating to Victoria’s future community mental health system and liaising with policy development in other topic areas including people with severe and persistent mental illness, bed-based services and youth mental health.

Sarah was formerly the Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Mind Australia and has held various roles at Mind Australia since Jan 2012, including as:

* Executive Director, Research and Advocacy since January 2017;
* Senior Advisor, Policy and Strategy for 2 years;
* General Manager, Research Development Advocacy from February 2013 to October 2014;
* Manager, Strategic Projects for one year while concurrently providing research and development consultancy for 2 years.

Mind Australia is a specialist community mental health service provider. You can read about Mind Australia here: <https://www.mindaustralia.org.au/about-mind/what-mind-does> .

Before joining Mind Australia, Sarah was Executive Manager, Research and Social Policy at Wesley Mission Victoria for 6 years.

She has the title of doctor because she has a PhD based on service development projects that she led in three diverse settings (disability, homelessness, residential aged care for people with lifelong mental health and alcohol and drug problems).

Sarah also holds a Master of Business; Graduate Diploma in Education and Bachelor of Arts with honours in English Literature and Psychology.

Sarah’s work at Mind Australia before being seconded to the Royal Commission was to oversee the work of the Research and Advocacy Division, comprising a budget of around $2M, with 16 staff organised into four teams: Research and Evaluation; Policy and Campaigns; Practice Development and Quality; Business Development. The research, policy advocacy and campaigns work is largely external facing, and operates to build system knowledge and then use this to influence for service improvement and system reform. Her last two projects included WA so she has some familiarity with the WA system including meeting with residents of St Judes hostel for a project on choice in NDIS.

Sarah has a highly developed understanding of how mental health policy and legislation shapes the lives of people who live with the impacts of complex mental illness which she has developed over ten years of work analysing policy and legislation and working with consumers, families and carers through the Mind research and advocacy activities.

She also has a good knowledge of the NDIS Act (2014) (Mind Australia is an NDIS provider) and the Victorian Mental Health Act (2014), and understands how they impact negatively and protectively on the lives of people who are subject to their jurisdiction.

Other project work by Sarah has included managing a joint project between Mind, NEAMI and five health service providers to develop an evaluation framework for their Adult Step Up Step Down Services. She has also sat on numerous advisory bodies at state and national levels. For instance, she was the inaugural chair of the partnership between VCOSS, the Department of Education and Department of Human Services (Vic) to develop and implement a strategy for vulnerable youth. She also established similar steering structures for Caring Fairly, with over 30 coalition partners and a small steering committee of national organisations.

Sarah has also written or contributed to a long list of publications:

## Book chapters

Pollock, S. (2020), *Socially inclusive service development: a new expression of democracy for nongovernment organisations delivering social care***,** in Sustaining Social Inclusion, Taket, A. and Crisp, B. (eds), Routeldge (forthcoming)

Pollock, S. and Taket, A. (2013), *Inclusive service development: exploring a whole-of-organisation*

*approach in the community service sector*, in Practising Social Inclusion, Taket, A. et al. (eds),

Routledge

Barter-Godfrey, S., Pollock, S. and Taket, A. (2013), *inclusion in participatory research – what were*

*the whitefellas doing in an aboriginal health project?*, in Practising Social Inclusion, Taket, A. et al.

(eds), Routledge

Taket, A., Pollock, S., Hanna, L., Learmonth, E., Farquhar, P. (2013), *Promoting social inclusion of*

*frail older people living in the community*, in Practising Social Inclusion, Taket, A. et al. (eds),

Routledge

## Journal articles

Pollock, S. (2016), *Shifting the power…are we ready to embrace the potential of co-production?*,

Insight, VCOSS, Melbourne

Pollock, S., Taket, A. (2014), *Achieving socially inclusive practice: analysing power dynamics in a*

*participatory approach to service development*, Journal of Interdisciplinary Social and Community

Studies

## Selected commissioned research and development project reports

*Trajectories: the interplay between housing and mental health pathways – report for Aboriginal and*

*Torres Strait Islander consumer and carer consultations* (2020), Mind Australia (lead author) (in

publication)

*Trajectories: the interplay between housing and mental health pathways – report for national*

*consumer and carer consultations* (2020), Mind Australia (lead author)

*Understanding people with psychosocial disabilities as choice-makers in the context of the NDIS*

(2018), Mind Australia (co-author)

*Mental health and the NDIS: a literature review* (2014), commissioned by Mind Australia for NDIA

Independent Advisory Council, undertaken with Centre for Mental Health, Melbourne University (coauthor)

*Establishing and effective peer workforce: a literature* review (2014), commissioned by the

Frankston-Mornington Peninsula Mental Health Alliance (lead author)

*Workers compensation and mental health: examining the mental health impacts of involvement in*

*the Victorian WorkCover system from the perspective of long-term injured workers* (2014), Creative

Ministries Network (sole author)

*Ageing with enduring psychosocial disability: service development options* (2013), Victorian

Department of Health (sole author)

*Healing Stories* (2010), Maya Healing Centre, Wesley Mission Victoria and Deakin University (coauthor)

*CIAO: care-system impacts on academic outcomes for young people in out-of-home care* (2010),

Wesley Mission Victoria and Anglicare Victoria (co-author)

*Talking It Up: aboriginal voices in the formulation of health policy that works* (2009), Maya Healing

Centre, Wesley Mission Victoria and Deakin University, (co-author)

*Evaluation of the Bullying Guidance Note: a case study analysis* (2005), WorkSafe Victoria (sole

author)