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Executive Summary

The context of the SANE Aged Care Project

Nearly half of all Australians will live with a mental health issue in their life\(^1\). As Australia’s population continues to age, the number of older adults living with mental illness will increase.

Some of the experiences associated with older age, such as isolation, loss, and a decline in physical health, may complicate the management of mental illness. Furthermore, experiences including the transition to a residential care setting may lead to a mental health decline in a person with no history of mental illness.

The aged care sector is poorly resourced to manage complex mental health issues. Many aged care staff do not have mental health training\(^2\). This is especially true of personal care attendants, who increasingly form the front line of aged care support.

SANE has responded to these issues with the implementation of the Aged Care Project (the Project). The aim of the Project is to raise awareness of these issues and help develop practical strategies to support older Australians living with mental illness and the people who support them.

What the Project has delivered

The Project, though still in its infancy, has undertaken a number of activities over the past two years. SANE conducted qualitative research to better understand the experiences of older Australians living with mental illness. The resulting report - *Growing Older, Staying Well: mental health care for older Australians* - was released in 2013.

Based on the recommendations of the research SANE successfully secured funding to develop and deliver a pilot program of mental health training workshops for aged care staff.

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The pilot mental health training program

The SANE Aged Care Project has responded to an un-met need for a compact mental health training program that covers information relating to all mental health issues, including depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, and psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia.

The program was piloted across Victoria and included information relating to:

- The signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Recognising signs of mental health decline
- Strategies to support a person experiencing mental illness
- Effective communication skills
- The impact of loss and grief on mental health
- Self care strategies

The program was developed in consultation with mental health and aged care professionals. The 3-hour workshop was delivered as an in-service to aged care staff working within a residential care setting in Melbourne, and rural and regional areas of Victoria.

The program aimed to increase staff knowledge and understanding of how to support older Australians living with mental illness and mental health decline.

The feedback collected from staff attending the workshops was collated and analysed to produce this evaluation report.

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify the impact of the pilot program on staff knowledge and understanding about mental illness.

It considers the effectiveness of the workshops on improving staff knowledge about supporting residents living with mental illness and mental health decline, as well as whether and how the mental health training developed by SANE has improved information availability about mental illness in older Australians among aged care staff.

The evaluation method consisted of a desk-top review drawing on workshop evaluation feedback data.

Findings

The Project is achieving its objectives in terms of increasing staff knowledge of mental illness and of increasing information availability relating to the experience of mental illness in older Australians. This has been evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive feedback from stakeholders. Feedback data shows that staff found the training to be:

- Effective at increasing staff confidence to support residents living with mental illness
- Successful at increasing staff understanding of the symptoms of mental illness and the practical strategies to support a person.

Though the Project has been successful at increasing staff knowledge and understanding of mental illness there are a number of challenges that are encountered at the organisational level.

Feedback data suggests that the most significant challenge is the time-limited nature of residential care work, making it difficult for staff to attend the training session. However, this is a limitation that can be overcome (demonstrated by the success of the pilot program) if there is a willingness to prioritise mental health training at an organisational level.
Recognition of the importance of mental health training is currently dependent on individual management practices, and not yet something that is mandated at a systems level.

In addition, although not witnessed directly as part of the pilot, SANE’s research found anecdotal evidence to suggest that aged care staff are increasingly from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and therefore, any training in this area would need to accommodate CALD needs.

**Structure of the report**

The report is structured as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1.</th>
<th>Provides an overview of the SANE Aged Care Project (the Project). Outlines the evaluation approach and methodology, including the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the evaluation framework and measures.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2.</td>
<td>Presents the evaluation findings with respect to each of the evaluation questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3.</td>
<td>Summarises the achievements of the project to date as well as the challenges and opportunities for the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities and future directions

*Impact on knowledge and understanding*

**Opportunity 1.** Include more group discussion, interactive activities and video content throughout the session.

**Opportunity 2.** Tailor the session material to include real scenarios and case study examples.

**Opportunity 3.** Consider the development of ‘refresher’ modules for services to incorporate into existing training schedules

*Impact on availability of information*

**Opportunity 4.** Migrate the information presented in the workshops to an online eLearning offering and mobile friendly format

**Opportunity 5.** Utilise a variety of mediums to deliver information about mental illness in older Australians to aged care staff and the wider community

**Opportunity 6.** Deliver a targeted awareness campaign to draw attention to the importance of mental health training in aged care.

*Impact on practice*

**Opportunity 7.** Lobby for the training program to be endorsed by peak professional bodies, training organisations and relevant government departments and initiatives.

**Opportunity 8.** Explore a licensee model for delivery of the program interstate.

**Opportunity 9.** Increase the reach and profile of the Project through community engagement and partnerships building.
1. Introduction

1.1 SANE Aged Care Project

The SANE Aged Care Project (the Project) focuses on solutions for a growing area of concern - the increasing number of Australians living with mental illness facing the challenges of growing older. The Project has:

- Delivered training workshops to staff in aged care facilities across Victoria.
- Developed information resources for consumers and carers.
- Produced a research report about the challenges facing older Australians living with mental illness.

Mental illness is experienced by nearly half of the Australian population at some time in life\(^3\). As the population continues to age, the number of older adults living with mental illness will increase.

Whilst little is known about the long term course of mental illness, the impacts on health and well being will only be exacerbated as a person contends with the effects of advancing age and the long term impact of living with mental illness.

For many older Australians living with mental illness the impact of physical health issues, stigma, isolation and financial instability create barriers to healthy and active ageing.

Furthermore, some of the experiences associated with older age – including the transition to a residential care setting - may lead to a mental health decline in a person with no history of mental illness.

The aim of the Project is to raise awareness of these issues and help develop practical strategies to support older Australians living with mental illness, and the people who support them.

The Project produced a qualitative research report to examine the challenges experienced by older Australians living with mental illness – Growing Older, Staying Well: mental health care for older Australians\(^4\).

Based on the recommendations of the report, SANE developed a pilot mental health training program\(^5\) that was then delivered to residential aged care facilities and Supported Residential Services (SRS) in Melbourne, as well as rural and regional areas. Over the course of the pilot, the training was delivered to 85 aged care staff.

In addition, the Project is currently exploring the development of a suite of resources to meet the needs of consumers, carers and health professionals; including factsheets, best practise guidelines for mental health care, interactive online tools, and video content.

The Aged Care Project, currently in its second year, has been successively funded through philanthropic grants from The Trust Company, part of Perpetual. A brief summary of the activities of the Project by phase is provided in Appendix A.

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\(^5\) The three-hour training session was titled 'Understanding Mental Illness' and delivered to aged care staff as an in-service. The training was delivered over the course of six weeks in July and August 2014. At completion of the training delivery 85 aged care staff members had attended the training. An outline of the mental health training program is provided in Appendix B.
1.2 Evaluation approach and methodology

1.2.1 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

This is an evaluation of SANE Australia’s pilot program of mental health training. The aim of the evaluation is to identify the impact of the pilot program on aged care staff knowledge and understanding about how best to support an older person living with mental illness or mental health decline. The evaluation has considered:

- **Staff knowledge.** The effectiveness of the workshops on improving staff knowledge about supporting residents living with mental illness and mental health decline.
- **Information availability.** Whether and how the mental health training developed by SANE has improved the availability of information about mental illness in older Australians among aged care staff.

1.2.2 Evaluation Framework

Two questions have guided the conduct of the evaluation across two outcome areas, as listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Outcome areas and evaluation questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome areas</th>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge</td>
<td>How effective is the mental health training program in improving staff knowledge about mental illness and how to support a resident living with a mental health issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information availability</td>
<td>Has the Project improved the availability of information about mental illness in older Australians among aged care staff?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix C outlines the indicators, measures and methods used to collect information relating to each of the outcome areas.

1.2.3 Evaluation Methods

The evaluation has involved a desk-top review of the Aged Care Project drawing on workshop feedback data.

The evaluation method is described in further detail below.
Analysis of feedback data

The purpose of this analysis was to understand participant satisfaction with the mental health workshops and identify opportunities for improvement. The evaluation conducted descriptive and thematic analysis of feedback data collected by SANE from each of the workshops. The workshop evaluation feedback form is provided in Appendix D.

1.2.4 Limitations of evaluation

The principal limitation of the evaluation relates to the small scale of the pilot and therefore the small amount of feedback data. Upon completion of the pilot, the Project delivered the training session to 85 aged care staff, and although there was a 100% rate of feedback response, this is still a small sample.
2. Evaluation Findings

2.1 Impact of the Project on staff knowledge

How effective is the mental health training program in improving staff knowledge about mental illness and how to support a resident living with a mental health issue?

**Addressing gaps in knowledge and understanding**

Feedback from the workshops, held between July and August 2014, overwhelmingly indicated that the SANE training has had a significant impact on staff knowledge and understanding of mental illness in older Australians.

A high percentage (95 – 97%) of staff who attended the workshop indicated that participation in the workshop had increased their understanding of issues that the training seeks to address, including:

- Signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Strategies to support a person experiencing a mental health issue

For over half of the staff attending the workshop, participation in the workshop *significantly* increased their knowledge and understanding in these areas.

*Table 1. Staff views of the impact of the SANE ‘Understanding Mental Illness’ workshop on their understanding of mental illness in older Australians*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared to before the workshop, have you experienced a change in your knowledge of the following?</th>
<th>No increase</th>
<th>A little increase</th>
<th>A significant increase</th>
<th>Total no. of participants who indicated an increase</th>
<th>Total responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The signs and symptoms of mental illness</td>
<td>n = 4 5%</td>
<td>n = 37 45%</td>
<td>n = 41 49%</td>
<td>n = 78 94%</td>
<td>n = 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to support a person experiencing a mental health issue</td>
<td>n = 2 2%</td>
<td>n = 35 42%</td>
<td>n = 46 55%</td>
<td>n = 81 98%</td>
<td>n = 83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses from the feedback data overwhelmingly suggest that presenting and discussing information about specific diagnoses was the most helpful part of the training session for many staff. Comments showed that the workshop provided a ‘greater understanding of the symptoms of mental illness,’ and was helpful in ‘understanding the differences between mental disorders’.

Staff also indicated that an understanding of practical strategies to support residents experiencing mental illness was very important:

‘I found the management strategies most useful’

‘The training was realistic and practical for everyday use’.

‘I enjoyed learning about practical strategies to support a person living with mental illness’.
While the majority of staff indicated that the SANE training significantly increased their knowledge, a proportion (around 40%) felt that the workshop had contributed ‘a little increase’ in their knowledge. This may suggest that a significant proportion of staff who attended the workshop came with some understanding of the issues.

Nevertheless, responses from the survey indicate that those staff who come to the training with some understanding of mental illness find the training beneficial. For example, 98% of staff who attended the workshop would recommend the training to someone else.

Furthermore, a number of participants have commented that while they had existing (often intuitive) understanding of the issues, the workshop provided an opportunity to either reinforce or formalise their knowledge. Comments included that the workshop was ‘an opportunity to refresh the knowledge that I have’, and was helpful to ‘reinforce information I know’.

‘The presentation was great. Much of it was familiar to me, but I would say it is essential to anyone not familiar or confident with managing mental health issues’.

The need for aged care staff to receive mental health training is further reinforced by staff views regarding the importance of the workshop for their own ability to provide high quality care. For example, 90% of staff indicated that the training was either ‘important’ or ‘essential’ to help staff provide high quality care.

**Effective design and delivery of project resources**

The positive impact of the workshop on staff knowledge and understanding of mental illness is not only a function of the need for the information, but also very much due to the quality of design and delivery.

Participant feedback consistently indicated that the key to the effectiveness of the training is that the information presented is evidence-based, practical and grounded in the lived experience.

With respect to the workshops, staff indicated that the incorporation of personal stories, anecdotal evidence and case study examples are crucial to the effectiveness of the training.

‘Listening to real life stories and examples was the most helpful part of the training session for me’

‘The case study example was extremely valuable, as well as the video and group discussions’

Staff regard the presenter’s ability to coordinate the session as critical to the effectiveness of the training. The presenter’s ability to explain concepts while being responsive to staff needs was also highlighted as an important part of the training.

‘The listening skills of the presenter and the group interactions was useful with helping me focus on the content and see relevance to my experience’

‘The accessibility of the presenter’s language and preparedness to ‘unpack’ information really helped’.

‘This was an excellent training session - well-delivered in a relaxed style, with good quality information, and responsive to the needs of the audience’.

Staff identified the opportunities created by the workshop for group discussion as key factors contributing to the educational effectiveness of the training. For example, staff commented on the value of ‘listening to other staff tell their stories’ and being able to ‘interact with the experience of other people in the workplace’.
Increasing the impact of the training on the service provider’s knowledge and understanding

In terms of the opportunities to increase the impact of the training on staff knowledge and understanding of mental illness, the evaluation received feedback in a number of areas.

First, a number of participants indicated that more interactive activities and opportunities for group discussion would be helpful. Additionally, some staff suggested that more video content throughout the session would also be an improvement.

A number of staff suggested that using real scenarios or case studies based on residents in the facility would help them to apply the practical strategies.

The workshop training was carefully developed to include a substantial amount of information delivered in a short session. In order to include more opportunities for discussion, and other interactive activities the length or content of the workshop would need to be changed.

Similarly, the inclusion of tailored case study examples would require a wholesale change in the way the training is marketed and developed. Consideration could be given to developing a longer, full-day workshop or a series of shorter sessions supplemented with online learning options.

The evaluation will now examine three key opportunities for improvement:

Opportunity 1. Include more group discussion, interactive activities and video content throughout the session.

Opportunity 2. Tailor the session material to include real scenarios and case study examples.

Opportunity 3. Consider the development of ‘refresher’ modules for services to incorporate into existing training schedules.

Opportunity 1. Include more group discussion, interactive activities and video content throughout the session.

The 3-hour workshop was carefully developed to respond to stakeholder requests for information covering:

- General introduction to mental illness
- Signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Practical strategies to support residents
- Grief and loss
- Self-care and the importance of preventing burn out

To cover this information in any depth whilst simultaneously keeping the session at a manageable length created an important challenge for the development of the training. In order to achieve this balance, the opportunity for group discussion and activity was kept to a minimum.

With the benefit of participant feedback, SANE could explore changing the content of the workshop to include more opportunity for activity and discussion.

‘Using more videos and interactive activities would be great – it keeps the staff engaged’

‘More activities, games and videos would help me to remember more information, I think’
The workshop included a short video about the experience of depression; Living With the Black Dog\(^6\). The workshop presenter received positive feedback about the video and its capacity to help staff understand the process of depression.

\[\text{The depression video was like a light bulb going off for me – I think I finally understand it}\]

At the time of the pilot program, there existed no quality, Australian video content relating to the experience of mental illness in older people. The Project is currently seeking funding to produce video content, which could be used in training sessions delivered in the future.

While the merits of changing the workshop content to include more interactive discussion, activity and video is demonstrated here, SANE is reluctant to make any significant changes to the content of the session; participants feel SANE has achieved a good balance between content and length.

An alternative option would be to increase the length of the session to a full day session. However, staff working in the residential aged care sector are often time limited and securing attendance at the training sessions created a significant challenge for the Project. Therefore, any changes to the length and mode of delivery of the sessions would need to be carefully considered due to the limitations faced by the aged care sector.

In light of these challenges, SANE is exploring the possibility of delivering the content in a series of shorter sessions. The training session could also be supplemented with online content and opportunities for ongoing refresher modules accessed through email or as an e-learning offering (to be discussed later).

Opportunity 2. Tailor the session material to include ‘real’ scenarios and case study examples.

A number of staff suggested that the inclusion of ‘real’ scenarios in the sessions would be a helpful way of consolidating information relating to good mental health care practice.

The inclusion of real scenarios relevant to the facility will require a change in the way the program is marketed and developed, following a similar model to SANE’s Mindful Employer program, for instance, where workshops are tailored to the needs of the organisation.

The Project will need to significantly increase its resources and capacity to deliver a tailored package. As SANE’s Aged Care Project continues to develop, discussions relating to the best mode of delivery for mental health training into the aged care sector will continue.

\(^6\) World Health Organisation. I had a black dog. His name was depression. Retrieved from: http://www.who.int/topics/depression/en/ on 3.12.14
It is likely that some aged care staff are exposed to mental health care frequently during the course of their work, yet for others, exposure to mental health decline or distress may be rare. Therefore substantial time may elapse between individuals completing the SANE training and being required to put it into practise.

In addition, although staff overwhelmingly report an increase in their knowledge and confidence to provide mental health care, there is a risk that this knowledge will recede over time.

It is therefore important for SANE to consider options for delivery of training that allows the user to refresh their learning. Recurrent contact with the content will lead to the most lasting benefit.

The development of ‘refresher’ modules is likely to be an effective option for staff to revisit the workshop material. A refresher module could include a review of aspects of the workshop training, as well as key tips and assessment.

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SANE would argue that mental health awareness and training is necessary to the provision of all quality care in a residential setting and therefore it is unlikely that a staff member would not utilise the skills learnt during the training on a regular basis. It is also worth noting that staff reported the training is relevant for everyday life outside work.
2.2 Impact of the project on information availability

Has the Project improved the availability of information about mental illness in older Australians among aged care staff?

SANE’s research found that there is little information available relating to the experience of mental illness in an older population. The lack of information and support in the area of aged mental health has been reinforced by stakeholder feedback throughout the Project. Stakeholders gave consistent feedback that older people living with mental illness are not well-supported in the community.

‘Stigma is a huge issue for this group and it prevents people from being given adequate support and care. This group is most often likely to need help but less likely to be provided with this help’.

Some stakeholder concerns relate to the availability of information resources for older people living with mental illness, their family, and friends. Specifically, this regards information relating to the processes of long-term care planning, the support services available, and general information about mental illness in older people.

The Project has addressed this need in a number of ways. First, the Project is currently exploring the development of a suite of information resources to support older Australians living with mental illness, their family, and friends. These resources will be delivered through a variety of media including video, interactive online and mobile content, podcast, and webinar.

One such resource will be an interactive Planning Guide to assist older Australians living with mental health issues to plan for future care needs and reduce the stress associated with some of the processes of ageing.

Secondly, the Project developed a handout to be distributed to staff attending the training session. The handout included a variety of information relating to the experience of mental illness in older Australians as well as a selection of SANE’s information resources and factsheets. A number of staff found the material to be ‘incredibly useful’, and ‘important to pass on to staff who could not attend’.

Finally, the Project has attracted attention to the issue of mental illness in an older population through the Growing Older, Staying Well report with over 1,300 downloads over a twelve-month period and distributed to over 500 organisations nationwide.

As briefly discussed in this report, ensuring access to mental health training and information for aged care staff is challenging due to the time pressures experienced by the sector. Therefore, exploring alternative means of delivering the workshop content so as to increase mobility and encourage self-paced learning may be an opportunity for improvement.

The evaluation will now examine three key opportunities for improvement:

**Opportunity 4.** Migrate the information presented in the workshops to an online eLearning offering and mobile friendly format

**Opportunity 5.** Utilise a variety of media to deliver information about mental illness in older Australians to aged care staff and the wider community

**Opportunity 6.** Deliver a targeted awareness campaign to draw attention to the importance of mental health training in aged care.
Attendance at the workshop is time-intensive for both SANE and the participating staff. A number of staff had indicated that workload and training demands were already significant. Although feedback received from the staff indicated that it was important to dedicate the time to the issue, for many services and staff, mental health care has not been a priority between the physical health tasks and procedures that need to be followed.

If SANE is to continue to provide training to time-limited staff, it will be necessary to think of alternative ways to deliver the content that will fit within time constraints. It is suggested that an online learning module would be a good way of doing this.

The material could be successfully adapted for online delivery with video content to supplement text and interactive components to engage the learner. SANE would draw on internal experience developing e-learning modules for the Mindful Employer program.

An online format would enable staff members to direct the pace of their learning and engage with the material when they have the time. It would also allow staff to complete the modules that best suit their learning needs. An online format provides a cost-effective and efficient alternative for both individuals and services to access content.

Although not an issue examined during the pilot, anecdotal evidence suggests aged care staff are increasingly Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD). The current training program does not cater to a CALD population. Creating an online offering would enable greater freedom to translate the content into multiple languages and include information relating to cultural sensitivities around issues such as death, dying, mental illness, and grief.

While many staff members agree that mental health training is crucial, the time pressures and priority of physical health related education is a barrier to prioritising mental health training. Delivery of the program in a self-paced online format would likely overcome some of these challenges.

SANE Australia delivers content and support through a variety of media. For example, the SANE Helpline delivers support over the phone, through a live chat function and online. The SANE Forums provide peer support in a live online environment and other training programs utilise eLearning, printed information, snapshot postcards and mobile apps.

In addition to the development of an online learning module the Project could utilise other modes of delivery such as video, webinar, podcast and printed information to help staff understand the importance of good mental health care.
The unique needs of older Australians living with mental illness are slowly gaining media and community awareness. However, some of the more prominent awareness campaigns including Beyond Blue’s Older Peoples program focus only on the development of depression and anxiety in older age. Delivering information relating to all mental health issues common in older adults is therefore an area in need of attention.

Opportunity 6. Deliver a targeted awareness campaign to draw attention to the importance of mental health training in aged care.

Some of the challenges described throughout this evaluation highlight the importance of raising the profile of the training and increasing opportunities for exposure to the program. A program review is currently being conducted and the evaluation report will deliver crucial insights to the review process.

Increasing exposure of the program may involve the employment of a business development manager to ‘sell’ the program, and to advocate for the inclusion of the training program on relevant training calendars.

Aged care services juggle a multitude of challenges day to day. Training priorities are often focused on physical care needs. However, staff report that understanding mental illness and mental health decline in their clients is a crucial part of providing quality care. A targeted campaign to educate aged care services about the importance of mental health training for their staff would likely encourage management to prioritise mental health training.

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3. Future Directions

Key achievements of the project to date

The SANE Aged Care Project, although still in its infancy, has made a substantial contribution to helping aged care staff better understand mental illness.

Feedback from staff and other stakeholders show that the workshops can help to equip staff with the necessary skills and confidence to support older Australians living with mental illness within a residential setting.

‘This session has given me more tools to work within my environment and further understand mental health conditions and strategies to support my residents’.

‘The information we learnt today has helped me to better understand my residents and how to deliver appropriate care’.

Further to this, some staff report that they found the information would be relevant to their interactions with family and friends as well. This feedback suggests that the program has the capacity for far-reaching benefits.

‘I can apply this knowledge to my residents and my family’

‘This is relevant for not only my job, but to help me understand my relative with mental illness’

Additionally, the Project has played a part in reducing stigma and increasing awareness around the experience of ageing with mental illness. The Growing Older, Staying Well report was distributed to over 500 organisations nationwide and viewed over 1000 times since its development in late 2013.

The Project has received numerous emails since the release of the report praising it as an informative resource, and one that has been referred to and referenced on multiple occasions.

‘I have read and shared your report with a number of colleagues, in fact I have previously used it as a reference in discussions. Well done on your work’.

‘Congratulations on SANE Australia’s excellent report, Growing Older, Staying Well. I trust that this gets the readership it deserves by distribution to policy makers’.

In summary, stakeholder feedback has shown that the pilot program has been successful in improving staff knowledge and confidence in understanding mental illness.

A continuing need for the SANE project

SANE’s research has identified the need for better mental health training among aged care staff, though SANE is not the only organisation providing such a program.

The Mental Health First Aid program delivers 2-day mental health training to people across the country and internationally. Beyond Blue also provides a 3-hour workshop delivering information relating to depression and anxiety in an older population.
While both of these programs have achieved the necessary scope to reach many aged care staff, neither delivers information relating to the provision of quality care to elderly residents living with a range of mental disorders in a compact 3-hour program.

As an organisation, SANE is highly respected for delivering reliable and accessible information with a strong focus on the lived experience of mental illness. As such it is well placed to deliver information relating to the experience of mental illness in older people.

**What’s next?**

As discussed, the evaluation has highlighted a number of opportunities for SANE to build on the significant achievements of the pilot program.

The pilot program has shown that mental health training is an important part of providing quality care to older people living in a residential setting. The main barriers to providing this program involve the time shortages experienced by many aged care homes and the lack of a sector wide willingness to prioritise mental health training.

SANE will respond to staff feedback relating to the content and delivery of the session in the following ways:

- Improve the delivery of the session itself with streamlined content including video, discussion and activities.
- Supplement the session with refresher modules.
- Develop and modify material to provide flexible options for delivery of the training including longer or shorter sessions, and the inclusion of tailored case study examples.

A major focus of the Project moving forward will be the migration to an online format. SANE believes the training can overcome some of the challenges outlined throughout this report by providing an online, mobile-friendly platform for learning. SANE is currently seeking funding to conduct this work.

As an organisation, SANE delivers education, training and support through a variety of avenues. To deliver on its objectives, The Project will continue to explore the delivery of information through a variety of media including online, podcast, video, and mobile apps.

While staff members agree that mental health training is integral to providing quality care, there is yet to be widespread recognition of the importance of mental health training. SANE will develop a targeted campaign to educate aged care services about the importance of mental health training for their staff.

**Future impact of the Project on aged care provider practise**

Although not an evaluation measure explored in this report, the report will conclude on a note about the impact of the Project on aged care provider practise.

The Project recognises that assessing an improvement in provider practise is outside the scope of the current evaluation. Quantifying the impact of the program on provider practise, and therefore outcomes for residents, will require multiple measures and data collected over time.

In light of these limitations, the evaluation suggests that the formal inclusion of the program on training calendars and as ongoing staff development will provide a good indication that service provider practise is changing, or that there is a willingness to address the importance of mental health training.

In order to encourage providers to incorporate mental health training into their training programs, the Project will seek to have the program endorsed by the relevant training bodies and peak body...
organisations. The evaluation further suggests exploring a licensee model for delivery of the training interstate.

In addition, developing partnerships and networking into the aged care sector may help SANE to position itself as the mental health provider of choice by the aged care sector.

**Opportunity 7.** Lobby for the training program to be endorsed by peak professional bodies, training organisations and relevant government departments and initiatives.

**Opportunity 8.** Explore a licensee model for delivery of the program interstate.

**Opportunity 9.** Increase the reach and profile of the Project through community engagement and partnerships building.
Appendices

A. Summary of project activities by phase

Phase 1. Research

(October 2012 – October 2013)

The purpose of this phase was to conduct an environmental scan of Victoria’s aged care, community health and mental health services in order to identify the areas of need and to isolate opportunities for strategic intervention to support the increasing numbers of people who are ageing while living with mental illness.

Activities conducted as part of Phase 1 included:

- Literature review
- Consultations with mental health, community health and aged care services
- Interviews with people living with mental illness over the age of 50 and their carers
- Development, maintenance and analysis of survey data

The surveys, interviews and consultations were conducted during February – March 2013 and 111 responses were received.

The information collected through the literature review, consultations and interviews was used to develop the *Growing Older, Staying Well: Mental health care for older Australians* report.

Phase 2. Mental health training pilot program

(October 2013 – December 2014)

Phase 2 involved the delivery of a pilot mental health training program for aged care staff with a focus on staff working in residential aged care. The program was piloted across Victoria, and included information relating to:

- The signs and symptoms of mental illness
- Recognising signs of mental health decline
- Strategies to support a person experiencing mental illness
- Effective communication skills
- The impact of loss and grief on mental health
- Self care strategies

The program was developed in consultation with mental health and aged care professionals. The 3-hour workshop was delivered as an in-service to aged care staff working within a residential care setting in Melbourne, as well as rural and regional areas of Victoria.

The training was delivered over the course of two months (July – August 2013) and 86 aged care staff attended the training session.

The feedback collected from staff attending the workshops was collated and analysed to produce this evaluation report.
Phase 3. Current phase

The Project is currently finalising the development of an information resource to help older Australians living with mental illness and their carers plan for their future care needs. This 4-page resource will be available in print and also as an interactive online tool (funding-dependent).

The Project will seek to develop a Best Practise Mental Health Care Guide for aged care staff. This document will be the culmination of consultation across both sectors and extensive partnerships with clinical mental health services, community and primary health, aged care and research institutes.
B. SANE’s mental health training outline

The 3-hour workshop will provide participants with information about mental illness in an older population. Practical strategies to manage mental health symptoms will be discussed along with training to recognise the signs of declining health. The workshops cover self care for staff and strategies for effective communication.

Understanding Mental Illness – 3 hrs

Part 1. General Introduction
- What is mental illness?
- Key considerations/ issues/ misconceptions
- Distinction between dementia disorders and mental illness
- Understanding the mental health system
- Understanding symptoms and recognising signs of declining mental health
- Practical strategies for managing symptoms
- Strategies for effective communication
- The impact of loss and grief on mental health, and how to help
- Self care strategies

Part 2. Signs and Symptoms
- Signs and symptoms of mental illness including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia
- Identifying signs of declining mental health
- Practical strategies for managing symptoms
- Effective communication

Part 3. Loss, Grief and Burnout
- The impact of loss and grief (on residents and staff)
- Burn out and how to support staff to avoid it
- Self care strategies

What will the workshop cover?
- What is mental illness?
- Key considerations and misconceptions about mental illness in the elderly
- Understanding the mental health system
- The distinction between dementia disorders and mental illness
- Understanding symptoms and recognising signs of declining mental health
- Practical strategies for managing symptoms
- Strategies for effective communication
- The impact of loss and grief on mental health, and how to help
- Self care strategies

What will you learn?
- An increased awareness and understanding of the mental health system and the key professionals involved
- Understanding of the symptoms of mental illness and the signs of declining mental health
- An understanding of practical intervention strategies and tools for effective communication
- Improved awareness of self-care methods
- An understanding of the impact of loss and grief on mental health and how to support residents and staff.

What can I expect on the day?
- Workshops are facilitated by a person with mental health expertise
- Individual and group activities
- A focus on practical strategies
- Interactive group discussion.

Contact
Sabrina Nemorin
Aged Care Project Officer
sabrina.nemorin@sane.org

SANE Australia. Aged Care Mental Health Training: Pilot Evaluation
## Outcome indicators and measurement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (1)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Mental health knowledge increased among participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (2)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Increased confidence in supporting a resident living with a mental health issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (3)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (4)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (5)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (6)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (7)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop evaluation (8)</td>
<td>Feedback from workshops conducted in the pilot</td>
<td>Providing support to residents with mental health issues in improved ways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of domains of online training:**
-improved awareness of information
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
-mental health knowledge increased among participants
### D. Workshop feedback form

What is your role in the organisation?

Please circle your understanding of mental illness **BEFORE** this workshop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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</table>

Please circle your understanding of mental illness **AFTER** this workshop:

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**About the facilitator:**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Please circle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 = Ineffective</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How did you find the facilitator’s coordination of the session?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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</table>

How did you find the facilitator’s ability to explain concepts?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How did you find the responsiveness of the facilitator to participant needs?

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<tbody>
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<td>Very Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to before the workshop, have you experienced a *change in your knowledge* of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No increase</th>
<th>A little increase</th>
<th>A significant increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The signs and symptoms of mental illness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies to support a person experiencing a mental health issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compared to before the workshop, has there been a *change in your confidence* to support a resident living with a mental health issue?
What part of the workshop was most useful for you?

What are the major benefits to you from participating in the workshop?

What improvements would you recommend?

Would you recommend this workshop to someone else?

How important do you think this workshop is to help aged care staff provide high quality care?

General Comments?