

Practice at the Bar is unquestionably stressful!

There is a higher than average level of stress within the legal profession. This may take the form of anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug misuse, family issues, work pressures and related problems.

What perpetuates the problem is the reluctance of people to seek help for the fear of showing signs of weakness. But we need to educate and assure ourselves that its OKAY to ask for help and that its not a weakness but a strength that could save your or someone else's life.

The ACT Bar Association has recognised the seriousness of these issues and has established BarCare to assist members in dealing with such pressures.

BarCare is a confidential service to assist barristers that acts independently from the ACT Bar Association.

How BarCare works

Members are encouraged to make separate contact with any panel member and organise a consultation. The Bar Association will meet the cost of the **first** consultation for **all barristers holding an ACT Practising Certificate**. The member will be responsible for payment of any additional consultations. (Medicare and/or insurance rebates may be available.)

The Panel

The panel members hold the following attributes:

- Formal qualifications in counselling or clinical psychology, or organisational psychology;
- Seniority and experience in their professional field;
- Experience in working with lawyers;
- Completely independent practitioners in private practice settings;

Confidentiality

The process is completely confidential.

There is no need to inform the Bar Association in relation to any session arranged. The sessions are strictly confidential and the panel will not be reporting to the ACT Bar Association on an individual case.

Payment of Consultations

Accounts are forwarded to the CEO and are signed off and the identity removed. This ensures complete confidentiality to the barrister. Any personal information is only disclosed to the Bar Association with the express permission of the barrister.

Source of referral

The nature of the scheme is aimed at a proactive approach. To overcome the reluctance of barristers to seek help, there is a proactive aspect that has been instituted with the co-operation of the ACT Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court of the ACT. Judicial officers of these Courts will, in any case where the facts or circumstances are considered horrific or of a particular confronting nature, advise the CEO of the name of the case and counsel involved. The CEO will then contact one of the panel members who will in turn make contact with the barrister involved to offer the services of BarCare.

Family members or colleagues who may have concerns about a barrister may also seek guidance about how they should approach the barrister who is experiencing difficulties.

If preferred, the CEO can also make a call to the barrister and offer the services of BarCare. In this situation the name of the reporting person is not disclosed to the barrister.

Key Message

We all from time to time struggle with various issues. Sometimes they go away and other times you can't stop thinking about them. Please allow yourself to talk to someone or if you see someone showing these signs – ask them if they are okay!

There are ways that you can reduce your risk of depression and anxiety – by exercising and spending quality time with family and friends, listening to music, laughing out loud and loving those close to you.

COUNCILLOR PANEL

Dr Bruce A Stevens

Dr Bruce Stevens is a professor in Clinical Psychology. Bruce is a fulltime academic as research professor holding the Wicking Chair for Aging and Practical Theology at Charles Sturt University. He has a small private practice on Tuesdays from 1.00 - 6.00pm. Bruce founded Canberra Clinical and Forensic Psychology in the mid 1990's and continues with his small practice. Bruce can be contacted on 0403 529 773 or email bstevens@csu.edu.au.

Kim Lehmann

Kim is a clinical psychologist who likes working with adults in therapy. She delivers personalised, evidence-based interventions across a range of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression and addictions. Kim's clients enjoy her empathetic and solution focused approach and consistently report improved quality of life and functioning. Kim can be contacted on 0409 611 635 or email kim@ccfpsych.com.au.

Sam van Meurs

Sam is a clinically trained psychologist who conducts individual therapy with adults and adolescents while also specialising in legal reports for the criminal, vocational, injury compensation, and family court arenas. He has worked in a variety of community and clinical settings with a range of clinical populations as a volunteer, paid carer, and once qualified, as a psychologist. While undertaking training as part of the Australian National University's clinical psychology program he has also had experience in performing competency assessments, and facilitating group therapy sessions. Showing a commitment to research, at present Sam is also completing his PhD in Clinical Psychology at ANU.

Sam can be contacted on sam@ccfpsych.com.au or via phone on 0412 352 028.

Professor Boer

Professor Boer is currently Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Canberra. Prior to his current position, he worked as an academic at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand for seven years and before that he worked for the Correctional Service of Canada for 15 years in a variety of contexts including sex offender therapist and treatment programme supervisor. He has published a number of articles and structured clinical assessment manuals for use with sexual offenders. Professor Boer is also on approximately 10 editorial boards including the Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability, Sexual Abuse: Australia, New Zealand, and the British Journal of Forensic Practice. Finally, he is an active clinician, assessor, and clinical supervisor. Contact douglas.boer@canberra.edu.au.