

Press Release

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Proud to be different—MAD Pride™

Australians affected by mental illness are joining an international civil rights movement – MAD Pride™ – to celebrate their difference and speak out against human rights abuses that still exist in Australia's public mental health system. A MAD Pride™ concert will be held this Friday at the Ryde Civic Centre to mark the establishment of the group in Australia.

Simon Champ, co-founder of the Australian consumer movement says: 'MAD Pride's™ about being different, and being proud to be different. It's about being open about our madness, which can be a very liberating experience.'

'MAD Pride™ events are about reclaiming identity from the dishonest stereotypes pushed by the media. It is not about political correctness, but about putting a stop to human rights violations in the psychiatric system,' he said.

'Much of the literature around mental health has focused on the victim status of 'mad' people. MAD Pride™ on the other hand celebrates madness largely from the perspectives of people labelled with mental illness who refuse to be classed as victims. It asserts the rights of 'mad' people without pleading for them, in the belief that we should not push meekly for minor concessions, but instead change the world into a fit place for us to live in.'

Consumer Activist, Ozzie Rights, said: 'MAD Pride™ is set to become the first great civil rights movement of the new millennium. Over the last century, those asserting their rights and self-determination in the fields of race, gender and sexuality have made giant strides forward, but people with mental illness continue to be treated poorly. This is set to change...'

The MAD pride™ concert, to be held **7.00 PM, Friday 8 August 2003** at the **Ryde Civic Centre**, will include music, singing and poetry. COW Co-operative in conjunction with Staywell Enterprise Limited presents the evening. Money raised from the event will be donated to the Ian Webster Consumer Development Fund. – a fund established by the Mental Health Association to help consumers to further their education.

Performers will include Simon Champ, Arana Pearson – a singer and musician from New Zealand, Maree Robertson – who will perform excerpts from her Queensland *Barking Mad Production*, and comedian Fay Jackson.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, from the Mental Health Association (02 9816 1611 ext 206) or NSW CAG (02 9556 9219). To make a donation, contact the Mental Health Association on 02 9816 1611 ext 206. For more information or interviews contact the MAD Pride™ International Coordinator, Arana Pearson on 0011 64 2189 8468.