



HUMANS OF THE ROYAL

Imani Gunasekara

Imani Gunasekara is a mental health survivor and Consumer Consultant at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH).

Imani was first hospitalised with a mental health issue in 1998. Although she didn't know it at the time, this was the beginning of a rich, fulfilling and contributing life as an advocate for people with psychiatric disability.

As a Consumer Consultant, Imani draws from her own lived experience of mental illness to speak out for people on our acute inpatient mental health wards and in our community clinics.

She is member of the Metro North Mental Health Consumer and Carer Services team. This group of people have lived experience of mental illness or caring for someone with a mental illness who work collaboratively to enhance the recovery journey of mental health consumers, carers and their families.

Imani's story is similar to many people with mental illness: sporadically going in and out of hospital, not being able to make sense of life, being depressed and unmotivated, having difficulty with relationships and being unable to hold down a job for a significant period of time. Despite her illness, however, Imani attained a Bachelor of Science with Honours, a Graduate Diploma of Science Communication and a Diploma of Education.

In June 2007 Imani's life changed when she started work at the RBWH. The hospital became her professional home where she has a rewarding career developing education resources for consumers; organising sessions about recovery for consumers as well as clinicians, and representing the consumer perspective at a systems level and an individual level.

A highlight for Imani has been the opportunity to conduct research which has been published in an international peer review journal and cited 27 times: "What Makes an Excellent Mental Health Nurse" and a work which has recently been accepted for publication: "What Makes an Excellent Mental Health Doctor." Another highlight was being awarded an RBWH Australia Day Award in 2015.

Imani is a believer that anybody with a mental illness can recover with the right support.

She is passionate about combatting stigma and holds hope for the successful recovery of every person who presents to RBWH with a mental illness.

