The Victorian Mental Health Act (1986) provides for involuntary treatment for people who meet strict criteria, including treatment in the community under a Community Treatment Order (CTO). The person must be discharged if they no longer meet criteria. Discharge can be made by the authorised psychiatrist of the service or by the Mental Health Review Board (MHRB). A new Mental Health Act will soon be introduced which will emphasise recovery principles and give greater powers to a newly configured Tribunal. CTO remain a controversial provision, especially as evidence for their effectiveness is difficult to establish. There is concern among clinicians that discharge by the MHRB (and the Tribunal under the new Act) results in increased likelihood of relapse and subsequent readmission. In general, carers have been found to be supportive of CTO, perhaps because they bring greater surety that treatment will be provided and adhered to.

This presentation will describe the current and proposed CTO provisions and give early findings from a questionnaire sent to carers and from interrogation of an extract of the state-wide data system that records mental health service access and utilisation in relation to those discharged from a CTO in a defined period.

Bio: Ruth Vine is the Executive Director of NorthWestern Mental Health. She has been a practicing psychiatrist for over 20 years and previously worked in forensic psychiatry and in the Department of Health (Human services) in a number of roles including Director, Mental Health and Chief Psychiatrist. Ruth is currently enrolled in a PhD studying Involuntary Care in the Community.