

[Information and support for families and friends of someone with mental ill health](#)

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Caring Voices Newsletter (May 2021)

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MHFFTas News

From the President

It is heartening to note the degree to which mental health has come into focus for our political leaders. There was much to be excited about at the recent State Election in terms of funding for the sector, whichever of the major parties gained power. I look forward to seeing the fruits of the promises which were made.



I write this before the Federal Budget is handed down while I suspect you will read it after this has occurred. The Federal Government has previously indicated that this next Budget should include funding for national peak bodies for consumers and for supporters of people with mental illness. The recent Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health services recommended that separate peak bodies should be funded.

Our national body, Mental Health Carers Australia, believes it is uniquely placed to be able to fill the role. It draws together the lived experience of families and

friends across the country. We have an excellent track record of being able to provide input to the national scene informed by your experiences, ideas and stories of living as supporters and carers of people with mental illness.

It is unclear what mechanisms the Government might favour with regard to establishing these new bodies. Whatever the outcome, we will continue to advocate strongly to ensure that there is recognition of the voice of mental health families and friends as a distinct group and acknowledgement of their unique circumstances and experience of being involved in mental health services.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Warm regards,

Leigh

From the CEO

Welcome to our newsletter for May 2021. We have, at MHFFTas, been swept up in the flurry of the State election and more recently the Federal budget. I say flurry because like many small not for profit organisations we needed to virtually drop everything and attend to chasing election candidates for their thoughts, ideas and most importantly their policies on supporting mental health and AOD families and friends.



Now its all coming to an end with recent announcements confirming which party will take us through the next three years in Tasmania.

MHFFTas wishes to congratulate Premier Gutwein on his success. We look forward to continuing our positive relationship with the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing in the hope of improving the wellbeing of families/friends who in our view are the backbone to the recovery of many people living with mental ill health and drug and alcohol issues.

However, we do need to be realistic in what the election process revealed. It is unfortunate that both key parties, Liberal and Labor, were weak in their responses to our questions around specific support and recognition of families and friends. Some independent candidates, together with the Greens, responded with written support of families and friends but failed to identify specific policies and future commitment. Most candidates either didn't understand our questions or they referred more to mental services targeting the consumer. Whilst MHFFTas applaud more spending in mental health and

alcohol/drug direct services, there is a deafening silence and a complete lack of funding allocated to directly support families and friends.

In spite of this MHFFTas will continue to advocate for and with families and friends for access to appropriate peer support, education and training and opportunities to have their voice heard.

We look forward to engaging with Premier Gutwein’s team to provide support and education to Ministers and key staff to assist them to better understand the lived experience of families and friends and their specific support needs.

Watch this space as we start to unravel what the state election and the federal government’s budget will deliver for our families and friends within Tasmania.

Introducing Kate Bond, MHFFTas Advocacy Officer

Kate comes to MHFFTas from a literacy and learning support background. She will work alongside families and friends to identify pathways of advocacy and support through the MHFFTas Advocacy Project. When she is not at work, Kate enjoys gardening, reading and appreciating the beauty of Tasmania.



Amazing Grace and Daisy are leaving the building!

We are sorry to be losing our dynamic Project Officer Grace, who is leaving to complete her Masters studies.



Grace has been at the forefront advocating for support and resources, and social change for families and friends. Staff, volunteers, service providers and our families and friends community have embraced Grace for her quirkiness, her beautiful vocabulary, out-there sense of humour and her cheek! Her best friend Daisy has brought joy to our office.

Both Grace and Daisy will be sorely missed. Take care and good luck. ❤️

From the Engagement Team



Hello everyone,
We have been talking a lot with families and friends since our last newsletter.

Many of you have chatted to us through our Lived Experience Advisory Group, Family Friend Representative Program and State Election consultations. Some key themes:

- the way that we speak about and identify our needs. We've been talking about where our needs align with the person we support, where they might be different, and how we navigate that process when we are looking to meet our own needs, as well as support someone else's.
- How do you think about your needs? How are they the same, or different, to the person(s) you support? We hope to keep this conversation going over the months to come.

If you're interested in what we've been up to recently, take a look at some of our project work below.

Policy Submissions & State Election Campaign

The Team keeps an eye on requests from the Federal and State Governments to contribute to policy making and reform projects.



We then present a submission. Our most recent submission was to the Parliamentary Inquiry on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Read the submission [here](#).

We have also been busy sharing your views with our State Election Candidates and asking them: what is your commitment to mental health families and friends in Tasmania? You can find our State Election Package [here](#).

This month we are looking forward to our next brainstorming session with our Lived Experience Advisory Group. We will review advocacy resources in light of specific challenges faced by families and friends supporting someone with mental ill health in Tasmania.

Digital Engagement Project

Grace has been investigating the barriers to digital engagement experienced by mental health families and friends. Some of the key findings:



- Many families and friends face challenges in regards to digital literacy, internet affordability, and having adequate service in the area they live
- In general, there is a strong preference for face-to-face engagement, but for those who do engage with us via our Zoom peer support, the flexibility of this medium is a key advantage
- The unpredictability of individuals' caring duties, as well as a lack of privacy in the home, pose significant barriers

We will present a final report to our funding body.

Safe Spaces (Peer Support)

This month, our face-to-face Safe Space Program visited Devonport. You can now find us on the first Thursday of every month at Headspace Devonport.

Over the next few months, we will be talking about how we can add some more locations to our Safe Space Program. If you would like to see a Safe Space session in your town, please get in touch.

MHV NDIS Workshop

Last month, MHFFTas hosted a very successful workshop on behalf of Mental Health Victoria.



The workshop sought to understand the experiences of people receiving NDIS psychosocial supports and how NDIS providers and workers could best work with them. We appreciate the expertise and collaboration of all people involved.

Contact Us

As always, if you'd like to get in touch, please don't hesitate to email or call.

[Zoe](#) 0436 414 482 [Kate](#) 0437 983 943

Yours in good mental health, Grace, Kate, and Zoe.

Donations

There are many ways that you can support us. We receive funding from several Government programs. There is much more we could do but we just do not have the funds.



We welcome donations and bequests from the public to assist us in our aims and goals and to build our Families & Friends Support Fund. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

You can donate [here](#).

THANK YOU Volunteers

We extend our gratitude to our volunteers who generously give their time and have an extraordinary impact on individuals, the community, families & friends.



You play a vital role within our organisation and the mental health sector. We value your dedication, passion and skills that contribute to the growth of the organisation. Thank you sincerely from the staff at MHFFTas.

AND a Volunteer Opportunity

Do you have one or two days per week to offer? Would you like to work with a friendly and supportive team?



We are seeking an Administration Support Volunteer for a three-month period initially, with a view to a permanent voluntary role in the future. The position provides quality administrative services in support of the admin team. If you are interested, please forward your resume and a brief background about yourself to admin@mhfamiliesfriendstas.org.au by the 14th June 2021.

Family and Friend Representative Program (FFRP)

The FFRP is flying along. Last month we surpassed the total number of requests received last financial year.



A huge thank you is due to the tireless efforts of the Representatives who contribute their time to ensuring that the mental health sector – both public and private – has the lived experience perspective included in their recruitment, service planning and delivery, and quality control.

With so many requests coming through, we are always looking for motivated individuals to join our team.. Email or call [Rahnee](#) if you want to know more.

Gift Cards by Nick Salisbury

Are you looking for that special gift card? MHFFTas has a series of 14 Tasmanian cards for sale. The folded cards include photographs from Mt. Anne, Frenchman's Cap and Mt. Field National Parks as well as from the Florentine Valley and Bruny Island.

[Read More or ORDER NOW](#)



Talking Point

In honour of [Youth Week 2021](#), our talking point is around young family members and friends of someone who is living with a mental illness.



As a young person who is going through all the rites of passages that young people go through - and caring and supporting someone they love - makes everything so much more complex. Trying to divide my time and energy to thinking and focusing on my future, school, the complexities of friendships, relationships, and developing a sense of identity and belonging, has left me feeling drained and confused.

Being a young family member of someone living with a mental illness can be tough. Not only do you worry for the person you love, but you also feel guilty. You feel guilty because there is a sense of resentment because it's you, as the young person, who is meant to be looked after. You feel a sense of injustice that you can't just be a kid and focus on what all the other kids are focusing on. But, like parents or older family members, there is a sense of obligation and 'it's just what you do for family'.

Being a young friend of someone living with a mental illness brings about a lot of the same feelings. When a friend, a boyfriend, or girlfriend is living with a mental illness, feelings of resentment and being trapped can be felt. You love this person, and you know they can't help it, and you want to be there for them, but when it is affecting you, and you are beginning to feel tired from it all, feelings of wanting to run is normal. But the guilt that comes with those feelings is also just as normal.

Like all family members or friends of someone living with a mental illness, young or older, you have an idea of how you want your life to look like for yourself and the people you love. When it doesn't turn out like that, you grieve and you feel angry and resentful and guilty, scared, worried and at times helpless. It seems as well that services that provide support for family and friends often overlook the especially difficult and complex support that young family and friends need.

From a young family member's perspective.

If you are a young person and you need support it can be tough ... but you're not alone!

If your parent experiences mental illness, it's normal for you to have all kinds of different feelings.



It might be hard to know how to cope with your parent or understand why they act the way they do. This can leave you feeling angry, stressed and helpless ... and a whole lot of other things. Check out [Children of Parents with a Mental Illness](#) to find out about mental illness and how to get help if you need it.

You can also try:

[Eheadsace](#)

[Kids Helpline](#)

[Young Carers](#)

[Reachout!](#)

Government Sector News

Have you applied for social housing in Tasmania?

Have you been impacted by the eligibility criteria? If so, we want to hear from you.



Housing Disability and Community Services (HDCCS) has asked us to consult with our families & friends community. HDCCS want to understand how the eligibility criteria (see below) for social housing has impacted on you, your family or friends.

Eligible applicants are assessed on the basis of four key circumstances:

- **Affordability** - how much rent an applicant and their household pay as a percentage of their household income.
- **Homelessness** - where an applicant is living and their security of tenure - e.g. whether they are sleeping rough, couch surfing, live in short-term accommodation, live somewhere that is not safe and healthy, or exiting short term, emergency or institutional accommodation.
- **Safety** - the capacity of the applicant and their family to live safe from harm and violence and includes family and sexual violence.
- **Health and mobility** - the impact of an applicant's physical and mental health on their capacity to achieve and/or sustain a private tenancy and requiring social housing often with a modified living environment.

Please note, eligibility and assessed need are separate issues and while someone may be eligible for social housing, they may not be assessed as having a need for social housing.

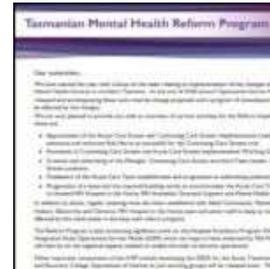
Your information will be de-identified and put into a scenario format so that your privacy is assured.

To share your story, please email [Vicki](#), or phone 6228 7448 (Tue-Thurs).

To apply for social housing contact [Housing Connect](#).

Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program

Read the latest [update](#) from the Reform Team as they focus on how to implement key changes in the delivery of mental health services in southern Tasmania.



And as you may be aware, the Tasmanian Government has accepted the [Alcohol and Drug Sector Reform Agenda recommendations](#) and the [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Review](#).

Community News

The 'Missing Middle'

Lived Experience Australia conducted a national survey of consumers AND carers asking why they didn't engage with (or disengaged from) the mental health system. The study wanted to learn why people slip through the gaps or do not receive the mental health care they need.



Key findings

- More than 50% of respondents identified that being unable to access the mental health services they needed contributed to the consumer declining into crisis, some having suicidal thoughts, attempting suicide or suicided.
- 48% of consumers in the study were discharged from emergency departments with no follow up or referrals
- 41% of consumers and 47% of carers could not access mental health services when they were needed.

- ♦ GPs are the primary source of mental health support for consumers and carers, despite their generalist nature
- ♦ Difficulties in navigating the mental health system, or meeting eligibility requirements, is a major reason consumers do not receive the care they need

What do consumers, families and friends need? They pointed to these key things that would make services better

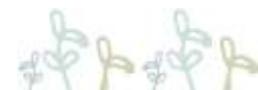
- ♦ Affordability - consumers indicated this was a major factor in accessing mental health care
- ♦ Availability - shorter (or no) waiting periods, sometimes mental health can't wait
- ♦ Simpler access - finding ways to make the mental health care system easier to navigate
- ♦ Improved collaboration - health care professionals working together to ensure gaps are closed and services remain consistent
- ♦ Follow up after crisis - ensuring a mental health follow up plan is in place after crisis treatment
- ♦ Inclusion - allowing consumers and carers to contribute and have a say in how their services are provided
- ♦ Support - through peer workers, persistent follow up and coordinated approaches when a consumer may be in decline

[Read more or watch the video](#)

Information, Support and Training

MHFFTas Online and Face-to-Face Safe Spaces

Our next sessions for families and friends are:



Online

Wed 2nd June (6.30 - 7.30 pm)

Wed 16th June (1 - 2 pm)

Wed 7th July (6.30 - 7.30 pm)

Wed 21st July (1 - 2 pm)

[Register or Read More](#)

Face to Face

Hobart Wed 16th June
St Helens Tues 1st June

Launceston Wed 2nd June
Devonport Thurs 3rd June

[Register or Read More](#)

Heartache and Beyond Workshop

Have you, or has someone you know, been impacted by the loss of someone to suicide?



We will host a workshop (Sat. 19th June, 9:15 am – 2:30 pm) on the theme of connection, support, sharing and direction after suicide impact. It will be open to any family member or friend who lives in the South of the State (those who live elsewhere, we hope to share this event with you next).

We would like your input BEFORE we finalise the event. Do you have a minute to tell us what we need to do to make sure our event is supportive, welcoming, appropriately planned and considerate? If so, please complete a short (very!) [survey](#). We value your input, thank you.

[Read more](#)

Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA)

MHFFAs, together with the Mental Health Council of Tasmania & Bec Thomas from Rising Kind, will deliver MHFA for Sorell & surrounding communities in June.



Participants must be able to attend both days of training and are asked to contribute \$20 per person to cover the cost of the take home MHFA manual and other materials.

WHEN - Thursday 10 & 17th June from 9.30am to 4.30pm at [Okines Community House](#)

[Register](#), [read more](#) or call 03 6228 7448.

Conversations About Suicide Training (CAS)

The 4.5 hour CAS course will be available in May and June with additional courses offered later this year.



Participants must be able to attend the full 4.5 hours of training and are asked to contribute \$20 per person to cover the cost of the take home *Conversations About Suicide* guidebook and other materials. Lunch is BYO.

Wed 26th May (9.30 - 2pm) [Starting Point](#)

[Neighbourhood House,](#)

[Launceston](#) - [REGISTER](#)

Thurs 27th May (9.30 - 2pm) [Paranapple Centre,](#)

[Devonport](#) - [REGISTER](#)

Sat 29th May (9.30 - 2pm) [Salvation Army,](#)

[Glenorchy](#) - [REGISTER](#)

Sat 5th June (9.30 - 2pm) [Sorell Memorial Hall,](#)

[Sorell](#) - [REGISTER](#)

Are you the parent or carer for someone on the Autism Spectrum?

A **free** information session for parents and family members. A confirmed diagnosis is **not** needed.



Parent/Carer Information Sessions – 2021 Program

[To register or read more](#)

The Hobart Clinic

The next free session for families and friends is on *Caring for someone with Borderline Personality Disorder* (Wed. 2nd June, 5-6.30 pm)



[To register or read more](#)

Sane Forums - Let's talk about Schizophrenia

As part of Schizophrenia Awareness Week the next online forum is on schizophrenia.

(Tues 25th May, 7 - 8.30 pm)

[Read more](#)



