

Media Release

## Mental Health Council Welcomes State Government COVID-19 Social and Economic Support Package

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) welcomes the State Government's Social and Economic support package which provides additional support for mental health services. MHCT notes that Tasmania is the first state in Australia to recognise the significance of mental health in its funding response to COVID-19. MHCT has worked with its members and the Tasmanian Government to help determine the needs of community managed mental health organisations across the state. The funding announced today will help these organisations adapt to new ways of working during this time of crisis and enable them to continue providing vital mental health support to so many people across Tasmania.

MHCT also welcomes new funding to provide increased services, including a dedicated phone number, to support the many Tasmanians who are experiencing anxiety and distress at this time. This will ensure that people have someone to reach out and talk to when they need it.

Mental Health Council of Tasmania CEO, Connie Digolis, said, "Now, more than ever, it's imperative that we look after not only our physical health, but also our mental health. This funding will help community mental health organisations across the state provide essential mental health support to all Tasmanians."

"Many Tasmanians are experiencing stress, anxiety or fear due to COVID-19 – but people living with mental illness who rely on supports to maintain their mental health and stay socially connected may feel especially vulnerable," Ms Digolis said. "Social distancing and self-isolation will create challenges to the usual way services are delivered. It's vitally important that we consider the needs of Tasmanians who are living with mental illness. This funding will allow organisations to adapt their services, so that Tasmanians living with mental illness can stay connected and continue to get the support they need."

MHCT will continue to work with our members and the Tasmanian Government to ensure all Tasmanians are able to access the support they need as together we get through COVID-19.

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**Available for Interview:** Connie Digolis, MHCT CEO

**Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide.**

Lifeline: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

**More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at**

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>



**Background:**

The \$4 million in funding for mental health announced today as part of the Tasmanian Government's Social and Economic support package includes:

- \$875,000 to establish a dedicated 1800 phone number to provide the Tasmanian community with psychosocial support, and provide a reach out service for older Tasmanians and industries significantly impacted;
- \$360,000 for increased capacity to provide mental health advice, support and referral for vulnerable Tasmanians living in rural areas;
- \$450,000 technology fund to support providers to use technology to keep vulnerable Tasmanians connected;
- \$120,000 for targeted support for Tasmania's migrant community regarding the COVID-19 pandemic;
- \$600,000 for increased capacity to provide mental health support for Tasmanians living in supported accommodation; and
- \$250,000 to adapt Tasmania's pharmacotherapy program to the challenges of COVID-19.