

Media Release

AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM THAT SUPPORTS ALL TASMANIANS

While the Mental Health Council of Tasmania welcomes the State and Federal Governments' swift response to the mental health impacts of COVID-19, it's vital to now start looking ahead and use what we've learnt through the pandemic to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanian's as restrictions begin to ease.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said, "We are working with mental health organisations across the state to track the mental health impact of COVID-19 on Tasmanians. Much of the data and insights we're capturing are telling us that services across the state are seeing significant changes in the number of people accessing support. We're not only seeing an increase in people who have experienced mental illness accessing support, but also a large rise in the number of people with no history of mental ill-health who are reaching out for counselling and guidance."

Traumatic events like the current pandemic are shown to have ongoing impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing, long after the initial crisis period is over. While the recent government initiatives have enabled many people in the community to access support through the restriction period, Ms Digolis said we can expect to see an increased level of demand for mental health services to continue for some time, as people seek support to deal the ongoing implications of COVID-19 on their lives.

"We must not become complacent and presume that measures put in place to deal with the COVID-19 crisis will be enough to enable the sector to deliver the required levels of support for our communities over the long term, once we return to some level of normalcy. The data MHCT is collecting will help us anticipate the level and types of supports that our communities need to prevent people from becoming increasingly unwell. Now, perhaps more than ever, we need to see all levels of government working together with health and community services towards an integrated mental health system."

The Government now has a great opportunity to continue working closely with the mental health sector and demonstrate their continuing commitment to a mentally healthy Tasmania. We must build on the work we've done together in response to the pandemic and create an integrated mental health system that supports all Tasmanians through the current crisis and beyond, whatever their level of need.

-Ends-

Available for interview – Connie Digolis

Media Enquiries: 0405 672 004

COVID-19 Helpline – A Tasmanian Lifeline 1800 98 44 34

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

Lifeline: 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 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/>