

26 March 2021

Media Release:

**There's never been a better time for Tasmanians
to #checkin and reconnect with their community**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has partnered with Primary Health Tasmania on a grants program to help community organisations across the state encourage Tasmanians to get out and about and reconnect with their community following the interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 35 organisations received grants under the Australian Government-funded program, to help them host events and activities across the state between now and the end of June.

The events funded under the program:

- increase connection to community
- educate community members on how to maintain wellbeing
- encourage help-seeking behaviour at a local community level.

Activities include self-care workshops, community gardening, concerts, pottery courses, drumming circles, and yoga.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said, "It's been a tough 12 months for all of us. As the vaccine rollout gets underway and we look to rebound out of the pandemic, these events happening across the state will give all Tasmanians the opportunity to get out and about and reconnect with their community. "

Ms Digolis said that it's important for people to take a proactive approach to looking after their mental health and wellbeing, to help ensure that things like loneliness or uncertainty don't develop into more serious mental health challenges.

"In the same way that we take a wellbeing approach to our physical health by exercising and eating healthy, it's important that we do things to help us stay mentally fit and healthy too," said Ms Digolis.

"Community involvement has a huge influence on our mental and emotional wellbeing, by providing a sense of belonging and social connectedness. We encourage all Tasmanians to get involved!"

Primary Health Tasmania has had a key role in supporting general practice and other community-based service providers to care for Tasmanians as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, and approached the MHCT with an idea about supporting communities through grassroots local organisations.

"We wanted to look at what we could do to support communities directly, in a non-clinical way," Primary Health Tasmania spokesperson Grant Akesson said.

"We know the pandemic has had an impact on the mental health of many Tasmanians, and we recognise the important role local organisations play in keeping community members connected and improving their wellbeing."

Head to www.checkin.org.au/suggestions and click the 'View All' button to find the program of upcoming events, with more events being added regularly.

-ends-

Media Enquiries:

MHCT: to arrange an interview with Connie Digolis, please contact Nick Sullivan on 0405 672 004 or nsullivan@mhct.org

Primary Health Tasmania: to arrange an interview with Grant Akesson, please contact Alexandra Patrikios on 0431 727 106 or APatrikios@primaryhealthtas.com.au

Event holders also available for interview upon request. Please also contact Nick to arrange an interview.

Please 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/>