

7 October 2021

Mental Health Council of Tasmania Media Release

Tasmanians encouraged to stay on top of their mental wellbeing

Since the pandemic started early last year, much of the focus by government, media and community has been on the impact COVID is having on our mental health and wellbeing. With many Tasmanians feeling the fatigue caused by ongoing restrictions and constant news about lockdowns and case numbers in other states, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has been working to understand the impacts of this situational distress on Tasmanians.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said “I think it’s fair to say that we’re all ‘a bit over it’ at this point. But there will be ups and downs, and it’s important to understand that any dip in our mental wellbeing is normal. ‘Situational distress’ is a human reaction to challenging circumstances. While it is to be expected, that doesn’t mean there aren’t things we can be doing to help lift our spirits and get through the current situation.”

She added that while it’s encouraging that people are becoming more aware of their own mental health and are reaching out for support when they realise they’re struggling, a greater focus on prevention is key to staying mentally fit and healthy.

“While there will always be a need for formal mental health supports and services, we should be firstly looking at ways to stay mentally well, rather than waiting until we’re unwell and then needing to reach out for professional support to help us get better. Maintaining mental health is about recognising the things we’re already doing that are good for our wellbeing, and identifying things we could improve on. While it’s great that we’re seeing more people reach out for support when they’re struggling; by finding things we can do every day to help keep us at our best, we reduce the risk of developing more serious mental health concerns. “

Assistance specifically for Tasmanians is available. ‘A Tasmanian Lifeline’, a 1800 phone service that was set up at the beginning of the pandemic, provides information on the resources available to support Tasmanians impacted by the pandemic, including social isolation, loss of employment, the impact on mental health, the financial challenges and, in the case of health professionals, working in a high-risk environment. You do not need to be in crisis to call. (1800 984 434)

In addition, MHCT created a website, which is designed to guide Tasmanians towards a range of information, resources, and advice to help them maintain and boost their mental wellbeing. It can be accessed via www.mhct.org. These were both funded by the Tasmanian Government as part of a support package announced at the beginning of the pandemic.

Mental Health Week in Tasmania also starts this Saturday, with a new theme for this year: ‘Awareness, Belonging, Connection’. The theme this year was chosen to reflect the importance of understanding our own mental wellbeing, and some of the important factors that we rely on to maintain and boost it. As part of the week, Tasmanians are being invited to participate in the many events that are happening across the state. The full program of events is available at www.mhct.org/program

Ms Digolis encouraged Tasmanians to access these resources if they have concerns, as our borders reopen, and we start learning to live with COVID.

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*Tasmanians can call ‘A Tasmanian Lifeline’ on **1800 984 434** between 8am and 8pm, 7 days a week, to receive support from a trained support worker, discuss concerns and where appropriate, be directed to a referral service.*

People can also visit the website to book a time for a support worker to call them: <https://atasmanianlifeline.com.au/>

Tasmanians looking for information, resources and services that can help them maintain and boost their mental wellbeing can visit www.mhct.org

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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/>