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Mental Health Council of Tasmania Media Release

## **Report highlights impact of COVID on community mental health workforce**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has released a report detailing the impacts of COVID-19 on the state's community managed mental health sector. The report was funded by the Tasmanian Government and informed through extensive consultation with over 20 community managed organisations across the state.

At the beginning of the pandemic in Australia, MHCT put in place a strategy to monitor and report on the impacts on the community managed mental health sector. This culminated in the [‘COVID-19 Impacts on the community mental health workforce’](#) report, launched on Monday evening by Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Jeremy Rockliff. The report highlights workforce impacts from a national level, right down to Tasmanian specific challenges, including the impacts on individual staff within community mental health organisations.

Attracting and retaining staff was one issue which was consistently raised throughout MHCT's consultations across Tasmania.

“We know that it has been difficult in Tasmania to attract and retain suitably trained and qualified staff. But things like travel restrictions and quarantine requirements that we have seen throughout the pandemic have made this even more difficult. When you couple that with the increasingly complex needs of those seeking support which require staff to spend longer with clients to understand their concerns and help coordinate other social supports, it has put further pressure on the workforce,” said MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis.

The report prioritises six recommendations, designed to increase the capacity of the community mental health sector by supporting workforce recruitment and retention and upskilling and diversifying the existing workforce in the state, while also decreasing the demand on services by increasing focus on prevention and early intervention.

“The increase in demand for support services is a strong indication that people are more aware than ever of their own mental health, and the need to reach out for help when they have concerns. But as people become more aware of their own mental health and wellbeing, we must also ensure that they are aware of the things that they can be doing to support and look after themselves, to help them stay well,” said Ms Digolis.

At an individual level, the report identifies that increasing workload has meant reduced time for self-care and has had a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of community managed mental health staff. Many respondents also indicated that they have taken less annual leave during the pandemic, with the lack of time off being another factor negatively impacting their mental wellbeing.

“The passionate and dedicated community mental health workforce have provided, and continue to provide, incredibly valuable support to so many Tasmanians during this challenging time. But the increasing demand has seen them invest much of their time and energy into supporting others, leaving them little time to do the things they need to look after and support themselves. We must address the current workforce challenges to ensure that we are looking after the people that do such an incredible job of looking after us.”

The full report is available at [www.mhct.org/workforcereport](http://www.mhct.org/workforcereport)

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