

27/09/2022

Mental Health Council of Tasmania Media Release

## **Mental Health Week launch to celebrate the role of people with lived experience**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) will officially launch Mental Health Week 2022 in a reception at Parliament House in Hobart on Tuesday.

Mental Health Week in Tasmania this year will be held between 8-16 October, with the theme '*Awareness, Belonging, Connection*'. The theme builds upon the success of last year, proving so popular that it has also been adopted for Mental Health Week in Queensland, Mental Health Month in the ACT, and as part of the theme for World Mental Health Day across Australia.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said the theme has resonated strongly with Tasmanians. "Tasmanians have embraced '*Awareness, Belonging, Connection*' because it's simple but it covers so many of the important factors that contribute to good mental health and wellbeing. It also speaks to what Tasmanians hold so dear – a strong sense of community and compassion for each other that is so unique to our island state."

The launch will also be an opportunity to thank and acknowledge the invaluable contribution of people with lived experience of mental illness, while helping to raise awareness of the incredible role they play in the recovery journey of so many Tasmanians through first hand experience of mental ill-health and Tasmania's mental health system.

Lived Experience workers from a range of organisations will be in attendance at the event, including Shannan Harris, a Vocational Peer Worker working in headspace's headStart program in Hobart. Shannan said that her lived experience enabled her to form a deep connection and strong rapport with the young people she works with.

"Being able to share my own story and experience with the young people I work with at headspace Hobart helps to build a strong connection with them. It shows them that they're not alone in what they're going through – that others have been through and overcome similar challenges, and that they can to," Shannan said.

"It's amazing to be able use my own experience of mental illness to help young Tasmanians navigate their own struggles. Using my own experience to help others is not only good for the people I work with, but it's also very personally rewarding and has even helped me on my own recovery journey."

Ms Digolis said that strengthening Tasmania's Lived Experience workforce would play an integral role in creating better outcomes for individuals, their families and loved ones.

"Lived experience of mental illness is a unique qualification that can provide so many incredible benefits to individuals, as well as their families and loved ones. What better way to launch Mental Health Week and to

demonstrate the theme *'Awareness, Belonging, Connection'*, than by bringing these incredible people together and celebrating all the fantastic work they do to help so many Tasmanians."

The Mental Health Week small grants program, supported by the Tasmanian Government, will this year see events happening across the state, from King Island to Nubeena.

A full program of Mental Health Week events is available at [www.mhct.org/mhw/program](http://www.mhct.org/mhw/program)

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**Background:**

Lived Experience workers (previously 'Peer workers') are people with a lived experience of mental ill-health and recovery, as either a consumer or family, friend or carer of someone with mental ill-health.

They are employed in designated work roles to use the unique skills and knowledge acquired from their personal experience of mental ill-health and their use of mental health services.

Though job titles and related tasks vary widely, a Lived Experience work role generally involves developing relationships, sharing personal experiences and knowledge, offering support and modelling recovery to help aid others in their recovery journey.

For more information about Lived Experience work, see the Mental Health Council of Tasmania's 'Peer Workforce Development Strategy 2019' [https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MHCT\\_PWDS-Web.pdf](https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MHCT_PWDS-Web.pdf)

More information about Mental Health Week in Tasmania can be found at [www.mhct.org/mhw](http://www.mhct.org/mhw)

**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/>