



**Mental
Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA

www.mhct.org

Annual Review 2021-22

→ A leading voice in the Tasmanian mental health system



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Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA

*The Mental Health Council of
Tasmania acknowledges the
palawa people of lutruwita as
the traditional and original
owners, and continuing
custodians of this land.
We respect their spiritual
relationship with their country,
and honour and respect their
ongoing cultural and spiritual
connections to these lands.*

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Our year in review

CEO, Connie Digolis



Connie Digolis, CEO

This time 12 months ago I wrote about the many challenges that the Mental Health Council of Tasmania, our members, and our community were facing as we moved through the pandemic together.

And while the last couple of years have no doubt had varying impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, the silver lining is that it's also increased the conversations about mental health, and shone a light on the importance of the work of our sector and the many incredible people within it.

In many ways this has also led to increased appetite across our sector and our State and Federal Governments to refocus reform for our mental health system to help ensure it meets the evolving needs of the people it supports.

And while our ambitious reform agenda pre-dates COVID, the past year has presented some great opportunities to ensure the changes and improvements we make are keeping pace with the world we are living in.

This was highlighted at the beginning of the 2021-2022 year when MHCT released our *'COVID-19 Impacts and Emerging Themes Report'* - the culmination of over 12 months of consultations with our members and the sector during the pandemic. The report highlighted to us that even though, at the time, Tasmania was presently free of COVID, what was

happening in other parts of the country, particularly in Victoria and NSW, was felt by Tasmanians and was affecting our mental health and wellbeing.

This report, and the year of monthly reports that preceded it, were also heavily referenced in the Auditor-General's *'COVID-19 - Response to social impacts'* report. I want to thank our members and my team for all the work they put in to creating such a valuable overview of the troubles facing our sector, and the barriers to maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing experienced by all Tasmanians.

I would like to thank all MHCT members for their amazing work. Through ongoing discussions with you over the last year we know that there are numerous stumbling blocks across the sector that are impacting your ability to deliver services and support. But despite this, it is your continued passion, commitment and dedication that ensures so many Tasmanians receive the support they need. It is our commitment to you that MHCT will continue to advocate for your needs, to help ensure you have the resources to continue your invaluable work in supporting so many Tasmanians.

→ influencing mental health reform and system improvement

I would also like to thank the MHCT Board. Their support and guidance during this past year has helped to ensure we are travelling in the right direction and holding our strategic course.

There can't be a reflection on the year that's been without acknowledging my incredible MHCT team, who continue to be instrumental in all aspects of the work we do. It is their commitment and ongoing enthusiasm that ensures the voices of our members, stakeholders and communities are heard and, more importantly, understood.

The pandemic isn't yet the distant memory we all hoped it would be by now, but thankfully it hasn't overshadowed the significant achievements of 2021-22. We round out the financial year with an ever increasing understanding of the needs of our workforce, of the people accessing or reaching out for supports, and the people and communities wanting to engage and take charge of their mental health and wellbeing. And while not all stakeholders always see eye to eye on the best way to improve outcomes for Tasmanians, what we all have in common is a genuine desire to see things change for the better, and an appetite to work together to ensure this happens.

Connie Digolis

CEO

Mental Health Council of Tasmania



Our Team



Shareen Pearson

Corporate Services Manager

"What an exciting year! We have welcomed several new staff members who have brought new ideas and dynamics to our experienced, and passionate team. We have introduced a health and wellbeing program for staff which, through participation in workshops has promoted and encouraged some positive lifestyle changes. I look forward to growing our team and supporting them to achieve their training, development and career goals."



Bree Klerck

Sector Development Coordinator

"A highlight was our advocacy work during the federal election for the reinstatement of MBS item 288 so that Tasmanians in rural areas can continue to access video psychiatry services. And seeing this recognised through the federal election campaign, with MBS item 288 now being reinstated."



Sally Errey

Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator

"I'm continually inspired by the work and commitment our Members and Stakeholders show in serving the needs of Tasmanians, bringing community together and leveraging relationships and resources to get results in often challenging conditions. This provides momentum and meaning to the work that I do along with the MHCT team."



Ella Bellamy

Lived Experience Workforce Coordinator

Ella went on maternity leave in early July 2022, and has since welcomed her son Hugo into the world. Congratulations to Ella and the Bellamy family.



Trudy Schmitzer

Lived Experience Workforce Coordinator

"I'm honoured to be a part of MHCT and its work towards establishing a Lived Experience Workforce for Tasmania. I look forward to developing and piloting the four day Introduction to the Lived Experience Worker Program, which gives potential workers a fundamental understanding and a guide to performing the Lived Experience Worker role."



Naomi Thomson

Policy and Research Officer

"I'm proud of how closely we have engaged and consulted with the community mental health sector over the past year – enabling us to ensure we are truly a representative voice and working towards effective and needed reform."



Nick Sullivan

Media and Communications Officer

"I'm proud of MHCT's work during the state election campaign, advocating for greater focus on prevention by empowering communities with the information and skills they need to look after their mental wellbeing."



Emily Carter

Administration & Campaign Support Officer

"My highlight was getting involved with Mental Health Week 2021 and seeing all the amazing events that our grants program funded! I'm proud of MHCT's ability to raise awareness of mental health in our communities."

MHCT Chair Report

David Tilley



David Tilley, Chair

Throughout the past year, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania has continued to move towards the goals laid out in its 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. While there is still work to be done to fully realise these goals, the progress the Council has made so far is an impressive reminder of the importance and the impact of our work.

As an organisation, MHCT continues to grow and find new avenues to work with and support not only its members, but also to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians.

The breadth of MHCT's consultation with its member organisations this year has been considerable, with input from across the sector which has helped shape many of the submissions and reports that MHCT has produced.

It is the vision of MHCT that every Tasmanian has access to the resources and support needed for good mental health and wellbeing. The community mental health sector should be proud of just how much progress has been made towards this vision during the past 12 months.

For me personally, knowing that MHCT is helping to inform, and implement many of the initiatives that will improve our mental health system, brings me great comfort, and makes me proud to have helped guide such an important and impactful organisation during my time on the board.

I have been privileged to serve on the Board of the Mental Health Council for three consecutive terms and I will be leaving this role at the end of 2022. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members, and all those who I have worked alongside with during my time with the organisation. These incredible people volunteer their time to meet regularly and discuss the strategic direction and progress of MHCT's work, and I am forever grateful for their invaluable insights and their unwavering dedication to such an important cause. It has been a privilege to work and learn with you all.



In particular, I would like to acknowledge and farewell Deb Fast, who stepped down from her role on the Board in June this year. On behalf of the Board and MHCT, I thank Deb for her invaluable support of MHCT during her tenure.

During my time with MHCT, I've been privileged to work with the Board and our staff to help guide the organisation through a huge amount of transformation and growth. This incredible evolution has truly reinforced the MHCT as a leading voice in the Tasmanian mental health system. While the Board has been there to provide oversight along the way, it's Connie and her team at MHCT who truly lead the evolution of the organisation. I wish to thank Connie and her staff for their invaluable support and efforts over the past six years of my engagement with the Board. The positive influence and reach of MHCT is a direct result of the efforts of Connie and her team.

Those unfamiliar with the organisation could be forgiven for thinking that it is much bigger than it actually is. The incredible breadth of MHCT's impact and influence is a testament to the hard work, quality, and dedication of both Connie and her small but passionate team. It's this unwavering focus and continual hard work that has helped MHCT not only thrive, but also grow. I look forward to watching the development of the exciting new projects which will be led by MHCT, as we move forward into 2023.

David Tilley

Chair
Mental Health Council of Tasmania

OUR BOARD

Jules Carroll

Chair (to Oct 2021)

David Tilley

Chair (from Nov 2021)

John Kirwan

Deputy Chair

James Versteegen

Treasurer (to Nov 2021)

Naomi Walsh

Treasurer (from Nov 2022)

Paul Campbell

Board Member

Deb Fast

Board Member

Nicky Osborne

Board Member (to Nov 2021)

Who we are



The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) is the peak body for community managed mental health services in Tasmania. We represent and promote the interests of our members and work closely with government and agencies to ensure sectoral input into public policies and programs. We advocate for reform and improvement within the Tasmanian mental health system.

What we do



OUR PURPOSE

Strengthen and advocate for our communities and service providers to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians



OUR VISION

Every Tasmanian has access to the resources and support needed for good mental health and wellbeing



OUR VALUES

- ▶ COMPASSIONATE AND RESPECTFUL
- ▶ COLLABORATIVE AND SUPPORTIVE
- ▶ RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTIVE
- ▶ LEADING AND ENGAGING

OUR ROLE



Provide leadership by advocating for continuous improvement across all facets of mental health and suicide prevention



Provide trusted advice to our members and decision makers to enable a robust and contemporary mental health system



Be a collective, representative voice to ensure future sustainability of the sector, the community and MHCT



Form and support strong networks and collaboration to support sector development and capacity building



Promote the reduction of stigma and champion mental health awareness and the value of good mental health



Influence policy development in the interests of our members and the needs of the broader population

PRIORITY AREA ONE: SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

GOAL: To ensure all Tasmanians have access to the supports they need

HIGHLIGHTS



We developed a Federal Election campaign, **The New Normal**, calling for place-based and person-centred mental health access, equity, and education for all Australians.

2022-23 Budget Priority Submission: Prioritising the Implementation of Rethink 2020: achieving a vision of a Tasmania where all people have the best possible mental health outcomes.

To support our work in the **Suicide Prevention** space we:

- Sponsored and presented the Mental Health Council of Tasmania Outstanding Contribution to Suicide Prevention Award at the Tasmanian LiFE Awards
- Continued to support and promote the Tasmanian Communications Charter, and the Safely Talking Toolkit



Supported the implementation of Rethink 2020 including:

- the local media and stigma strategy,
- mapping of mental health and wellbeing initiatives across state government strategies,
- and the development of the COVID19 workforce impacts report.

➤ **MHCT continues our work in system improvement**, after being named as a key stakeholder in the development and implementation of Rethink 2020 – our state plan for mental health. This included mapping mental health and wellbeing initiatives across state government strategies, and commencing work on developing a local media engagement action plan to reduce stigmatising content in Tasmanian news media.

➤ **MHCT also contributed submissions to a diverse range of important community consultation processes** including the Parliamentary Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania, the Review of the Public Trustee in Tasmania, the National Mental Health

Workforce Strategy consultation and the Tasmanian Active Ageing Community Consultation, to name just a few.

➤ **We represented the community mental health sector** as part of the State Mental Health Services (SMHS) reform process, the Legislative Council inquiry into rural health services, youth mental health services access consultation, and through our budget priority submission 2022-2023 that highlighted the importance of investment into the development of the mental health workforce in Tasmania.

➤ **We also facilitated four Tasmanian Mental Health Leaders Forums**, bringing together CEOs and executive staff of community mental health organisations

to advance thought leadership, strategic planning and collaborative action across the sector.

➤ **As our system advocacy work has expanded**, we've also provided input into the Youth Justice Reform, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Community Consultative Group, the Healthy Tasmania Strategy, the Smoking Cessation Advisory Group, Regional Recovery Committees and the Premier's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council. Our work in this space aims to contribute to coordinated and consistent cross-sector strategies that support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians and will continue to play an important role in prevention, early intervention, and recovery.

PRIORITY AREA ONE: SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

SUBMISSIONS AND REPORTS:

JUNE/JULY 2021	JULY 2021	AUGUST 2021	
COVID-19 Sector Impacts report	Submission to the Tasmanian Legislative Council’s Parliamentary Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania – and provided evidence at the public hearing	Re-submission to the Tasmanian Legislative Council Inquiry into Rural Health Services – and provided evidence at the public hearing	
SEPTEMBER 2021	SEPTEMBER 2021	OCTOBER 2021	NOVEMBER 2021
Response to the Review of the Public Trustee in Tasmania	Submission to the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy consultation	Response to proposed NDIS legislative improvements and the Participant Service Guarantee	Submission to the NDIS Amendment Bill 2021
NOVEMBER 2021		NOVEMBER 2021	
Report: Impacts of COVID-19 on the community mental health workforce – highlighted the workforce challenges facing the community mental health sector, the report was released by the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing in November 2021		Report: Youth Mental Health Services State-wide Consultation – provided insights into the access issues affecting youth mental health services and collaboration on ways to address these issues.	
DECEMBER 2021	MARCH 2022	MARCH 2022	APRIL 2022
Budget Priority Submission 2022-23	Response to Reforming Tasmania’s Youth Justice System Discussion Paper	Submission to the Tasmanian Literacy Advisory Panel’s community consultation	Submission to the Tasmanian H.E.A.R Active Ageing Community Consultation

COMMITTEES ETC. THAT WE SAT ON/REPRESENTED AT:

- Child and Youth Wellbeing Community Consultative Group
- CMHA Executive Leadership Group
- CMHA Policy Network
- Community Services COVID-19 Response Steering Committee
- Equally Well Working Group
- Mental Health Act Review Reference Group
- Mental Health Integration Hub Partnership Group
- Mental Health Related Projects Disability and Sexual Assault Project Steering Group
- Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Leadership Group
- National Psychosocial Support Advocacy Group
- OPMHS Project Control Group
- Premier's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council
- Recovery College Advisory Group
- Rethink 2020 Working Group
- Review of Ageing Well Strategy Working Group
- State Mental Health Services Reform Steering Group
- Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Committee
- Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network
- Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy Project Control Group

PRIORITY AREA TWO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GOAL: To increase understanding of the role everyone can play in good mental health and wellbeing in the Tasmanian community

HIGHLIGHTS

MEDIA

69

interviews and quotes
across the media, including
TV, radio and print.

CONNECTIONS

3,102 > Facebook

405 > Instagram

658 > email subscribers

MHCT WEBSITE



30,539
pageviews



11,413
visitors

#CHECKIN CAMPAIGN AND WEBSITE



19,814
pageviews



3,942
visitors

With the state's borders opening
in December 2021, we launched
a new section of the **#checkin**
website, designed to support
Tasmanians who were anxious
about the impact of reopening.

Distributed nearly

2,500

#checkin
Small Business Toolkits,
designed to help business owners,
managers, and employees to create
mentally healthy workplaces.

"It's important that we empower all Tasmanians to better understand and value their own mental health and wellbeing, and the many factors that influence it [...] more than that, we need to also ensure that they feel safe and supported to reach out for help."

– John Kirwan, CEO Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania recipient

PRIORITY AREA TWO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



**Mental
Health
Week
2021**
TASMANIA

“Mental Health Week... is an important and timely reminder for people to take the time to look after their wellbeing and check on family, friends and neighbours.”

THE HON. JEREMY ROCKLIFF, MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

9-16

OCTOBER 2021

\$47,000

grants funds

TO

47

organisations

MORE THAN

10,000

TASMANIANS PARTICIPATED IN EVENTS ACROSS THE STATE

After the disruptions of 2020, Mental Health Week in 2021 was an opportunity for people to reconnect with their community through numerous in-person events being held by organisations across the state.

MHCT again facilitated the Mental Health Week grants program, through support from the Tasmanian Government and Primary Health Tasmania, helping to fund over 45 of the 75 events held across the state during the week.

Events ranged from bush dances to trivia nights, art, music, storytelling, educational workshops, exhibitions, films, dog walking, gardening, comedy shows and everything in between. Many MHCT members got involved and held events of their own, demonstrating innovative and creative ways to share the message, bring communities together and leverage their resources to promote mental health literacy and start conversations.

To help celebrate this return to face-to-face events, we launched a new theme for the week, ‘Awareness, Belonging, Connection’. The theme reflects some of the major elements that help to keep us mentally fit and healthy, while encompassing the values that make Tasmania so unique and such a great place to live. These factors, plus it’s simplicity, have seen the theme adopted and embraced by individuals, organisations, and communities across the state.

“Thank you once again for the opportunity to celebrate MHW, raise awareness, build connections and generate a sense of belonging in our community.”

– MHW Grant recipient

PRIORITY AREA THREE: WORKFORCE

GOAL: To support the development of a highly skilled and sustainable Tasmanian mental health workforce

HIGHLIGHTS



We launched our Workforce Report which details the impacts of COVID-19 on the state's community managed mental health sector, and the many incredible people that work within it.

Delivered Lived Experience Peer Worker induction training

2 SESSIONS

11 PARTICIPANTS



"Listening to examples and stories of experience were extremely helpful in defining my future practice and how to engage with service users. The workbook provided a good amount of information and follow up questions were welcomed and answered in a professional manner."

LIVED EXPERIENCE PEER WORK TRAINING PARTICIPANT

➤ The project to support the development of a Lived Experience Peer workforce has made significant progress during 2021-2022, with the launch of the Lived Experience Workforce Development Strategy Implementation Plan in May 2022 to help guide the work.

➤ We have formed a community of practise to facilitate co design of the Lived Experience Peer workforce including managers, team leaders and lived experienced workers currently employed. A survey was conducted and valuable information regarding education pathways and workforce information were identified.

➤ We also supported TasTAFE with the redesign of the Certificate IV for peer work mental health and identified a clear pathway towards a nationally accredited qualification for the Lived Experience Peer worker.

➤ The development of a four-day introductory course is underway, which aims to give potential workers a fundamental understanding and a guide to performing the Lived Experience Peer Worker role. This will be piloted in November, and then be refined and expanded based on feedback from participants.

"It's important that we empower all Tasmanians to better understand and value their own mental health and wellbeing, and the many factors that influence it [...] more than that, we need to also ensure that they feel safe and supported to reach out for help."

– Lived Experience Peer Work training participant

PRIORITY AREA FOUR: MEMBERSHIP

GOAL: To engage, support and strengthen our work with members to achieve an integrated mental health system

HIGHLIGHTS



40

member
organisations



13

individual
members



10

associate
members

➤ INCLUDING 13 NEW MEMBERS



Tasmanian Mental Health Leaders Forums

- 4 meetings facilitated
- over 80 participants in total
- Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, attended the August 2021 and March 2022.



Regional Mental Health Group Meetings

- 9 meetings coordinated across the state
- over 98 participants in total
- 20 presentations from participants

were held in various locations across the state, providing an opportunity to engage with service providers directly, facilitate networking, hear from government and other key stakeholders, and share information at a regional level.

➤ **MHCT also hosted a Launceston networking event for members** in May which was well attended and a great opportunity to get to know members at all levels, individual, associate and full member organisations, and hear about what's happening in the north of the state. Conversations at these events have led to further project, consultation and policy work and help inform advocacy and representation on behalf of our Members, Access and Affordability being just one example. More events are planned for the latter half of the year including presentations by an international mental health expert, youth round tables and lived experience workforce training. All of which require valuable participation and contribution by our MHCT members and we are grateful for your time and commitment to sector development.

We surveyed participants at 3 Regional Mental Health Group meetings, and MHCT members and attendees at the Tasmanian Mental Health Leaders Forum. The results have led to continued improvements in the meeting formats such as:

- providing both an online and in-person option around the State,
- expanding the invitation list to increase sector and community representation
- featured guest speakers from government agencies and
- topics of interest to the sector.

78% of attendees at Regional Mental Health Group meetings were interested in opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

➤ **The past year has seen some vital engagement and consultation** with our Member organisations, especially with the insight required for our Federal election advocacy work. Thanks to Member input we were able to identify costs and Medicare rebate challenges and make it a key campaign issue, with our advocacy around the issue leading to a number of services now being re-introduced. In addition, nine Regional Mental Health Group meetings

"Red Cross greatly appreciates and recognises the contribution and impact of the MHCT as a peak body for mental health, and thank you for your support of members, stakeholders and community."

– Jake Smith, Regional Manager Australian Red Cross



Our Members 2021–2022

MHCT is a member-based peak body, and we acknowledge the dedication of our member organisations, all of whom make a difference to the lives of Tasmanians through the provision of the high-quality programs and supports.

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Advocacy Tasmania

Anglicare Tasmania

Australian Red Cross

Baptcare

Bethlehem House

CatholicCare

Choose Life Services

Colony 47

CoRES Australia

Cornerstone Youth Services Inc

Flourish

GROW

Karitane

Langford Support Services

Left and Right Counselling

Life Without Barriers

Lifeline Tasmania

Live Well Tasmania

Men's Resources Tasmania

Migrant Resource Centre

Mindfulness Programs Australasia

Mission Australia

Positive Solutions

Psychology CAFFE

Relationships Australia

Remedy Healthcare

Richmond Fellowship Tasmania

Royal Flying Doctor Service

Rural Alive and Well (RAW)

Rural Health Tasmania

Salvation Army Bridge Program

Seedwings Art Therapy

Stride

Teen Challenge Tasmania

The Hobart Clinic

The LINK (headspace Hobart)

Wellways

Working It Out

yourtown – Kids Helpline

Youth, Family & Community
Connections (YFCC)

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Daryl Lamb (Life Member)

Diana Taylor

Emmanuelle (Emmy) Bostock

Graeme Lynch AM

Kate Griggs

Maree McCulley

Mark Davis

Matt Hill

Michelle Swallow

Patrick Carlisle (Life Member)

Renate Hughes

Ross Barwick

Therese Ryan

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Asthma Australia

Carers Tasmania

Epilepsy Tasmania

Healthy Business

Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Tasmania Branch

RESPECT Occupational Therapy

Salveo Healthcare Services

TasTAFE

Triple P International (Positive
Parenting Program)

Well Minds Work





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