

www.mhct.org



**Mental
Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA



Mental Health Council of Tasmania Budget Priority Submission

2023-2024

AUTHORISED BY:

Connie Digolis
Chief Executive Officer

cdigolis@mhct.org
03 6224 9222
0418 431 995

Level 1, 131A Collins Street
Hobart TAS 7000

Supported by the Tasmanian
Government through the
Department of Health

Contents

About Us.....	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Future Proofing MHCT’s Capacity and Tasmania’s Reform Process	7
a. Mental Health Council of Tasmania Core Funding.....	7
b. Supporting the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy.....	10
c. Addressing Tasmanian Mental Health Workforce Concerns	12
d. Mental Health Week Grant Program and Community Achievement Award.....	14
2. Lived Experience Peer Training and Development Hub.....	16
3. Mental Health Access and Affordability in Tasmania	20
References.....	22

About Us

The [Mental Health Council of Tasmania](https://www.mhct.org) (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. Our purpose is to strengthen and advocate for our communities and service providers to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, and our vision is that every Tasmanian has access to the resources and support needed for good mental health and wellbeing.

Executive Summary

MHCT welcomes the opportunity to provide a Budget Priority Submission (BPS) to the Department of Treasury and Finance for the 2023-2024 financial year. MHCT recognises the contributions the Tasmanian Government has made to improving the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

MHCT notes the Tasmanian Treasurer's request that the current round of submissions focus on the areas listed below, and has ensured our requests in this BPS provide further alignment with the Tasmanian Government's policy agenda:

- Supporting Tasmanians with the rising cost of living;
- Improvements that could be made to existing Government services or processes, including grant application and/or management processes; and
- Opportunities to improve services that are directed towards vulnerable people.

As the lockdowns, restrictions and social isolation experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic retreat, societal and economic impacts are increasingly emerging. Workforce issues, stagnating growth, economic uncertainty and instability, and spiralling costs experienced across personal and business realms are all significant and worrying features of the current environment. The need for timely, tailored and seamless mental health and wellbeing services and supports has never been greater, as Tasmanians navigate the challenging post-pandemic landscape.

The mental health system in Tasmania is complex, interconnected and no one element of the system 'happens' or is delivered in isolation of other elements. With continuity of care front of mind for Tasmanians seeking mental health services and supports, MHCT urges the Tasmanian Government to consider the below requests as a suite of complementary, aligned and mutually connected initiatives. State Government investment in the suite will significantly strengthen reform and systemic work already underway, drive progress towards integration, protect and build the capacity of our service providers, and support the development of the required workforce including Lived Experience Peer workers.

With the above challenges, considerations and opportunities in mind, noting the raft of policy and reform activity taking place both in Tasmania and across all jurisdictions, and following consultations with our members and other stakeholders, MHCT has developed a BPS with a strong focus on moving towards the provision of world class mental health supports for Tasmanians by:

1. bolstering MHCT by 'future proofing' our capacity as the peak body representing community mental health service providers in Tasmania
.....
2. supporting the work of the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy, including the reinvigoration of and reinvestment in the Tasmanian Communications Charter platform and resources, promotions and 'Safely Talking' training opportunities
.....
3. further supporting work already underway to monitor and address mental health workforce concerns with the funding and recruitment of a Mental Health Workforce Coordinator to implement actions identified by The Reform Recruitment for the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Sector Working Group
.....
4. increasing investment in the annual Mental Health Week Grants program and establishing a Tasmanian Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award
.....
5. providing a multi-year funding commitment for a Mental Health and AOD Lived Experience Training and Development Hub (an identified implementation action of the Tasmanian Lived Experience Peer Workforce Development Strategy)
.....
6. ensuring access and affordability for Tasmanians to ensure continuity and the highest standard of mental health supports. Address spiralling service and salary expenses and impacts by providing adequate indexation arrangements within funding agreements and establish five-year contract periods for all community and private mental health service providers

Below is the summary outline of our financial requests within this BPS. Please note, detailed budgets for each request can be provided as required.

MHCT Request	Investment Required
MHCT Core Funding Increase	<p>\$517,750 over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs)</p> <p>\$179,581 (increase annual indexation to 5% [currently 3%] on MHCT's current core funding contract 2023 to 2027)</p>
Supporting the third Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027	Project officer and Communications Charter platform/resources reinvigoration: \$588,950 over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs)
Addressing Tasmanian Mental Health Workforce Concerns	Recruit and retain a Mental Health Workforce Coordinator: \$689,698 over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs)
Mental Health Week Grants and Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award	\$400,000 funding increase over five years to support expanded Mental Health Week Grants program and Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award
Mental Health and AOD Lived Experience Training and Development Hub	Hub establishment and maintenance: \$2,919,555 over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs) to be co-funded by State Government and Primary Health Tasmania (PHT)
Mental Health Access and Affordability in Tasmania	<p>Five year government funding contracts for all community and private mental health service providers</p> <p>5% annual indexation applied across all existing and new funding contracts for Tasmanian mental health service providers</p>

1. Future Proofing MHCT's Capacity and Tasmania's Reform Process

a. Mental Health Council of Tasmania Core Funding

With just 50% of MHCT's current funding envelope emanating from our core funding agreement, MHCT has continued to expand capacity and deliver exponentially in line with an increasing commitment to Tasmania's mental health and suicide prevention reform agenda, combined with the recent challenging period. MHCT is overly reliant on ad-hoc, project-based funding to deliver core work commensurate to our Peak Body role, and there is real and inherent risk to our operational continuity at the quality and breadth required should project-based, short term funding opportunities decrease in the current economically unstable environment.

MHCT currently provides representation on close to 40 committees, with the number set to consistently increase as new initiatives, reform work and State and Commonwealth agendas emerge to address mental health, suicide prevention and Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention (PPEI) initiatives. MHCT's role on these working/advisory groups and committees is significant, as we work effectively to advocate for our members and the sector, whilst directly supporting the development, establishment, maintenance and monitoring of Tasmania's complex and multi-faceted reform agenda.

Systemic and reform work is ongoing and will continue to grow over the medium to long-term, as State Government, agencies and the mental health sector seek to enact the initiatives outlined in the recent [Tasmanian Bilateral Agreement for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#). Furthermore, implementation work for Tasmania's [Rethink 2020](#) continues, and Tasmania's soon to be released 2023-2027 Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy will include stated priority actions for implementation.

Additionally, MHCT has an ongoing role as key contributor and interface within the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program setting, as this critical work to integrate the community and state-run mental health system continues. MHCT also provides community mental health sector interface and conceptual contributions to support progress on the implementation of the Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) model and tool, and the implementation of the Central Intake and Referral Service (CIRS).

The above snapshot is by no means an exhaustive list of MHCT's role and impact, rather examples only of our engagement and contribution - effectively, the 'tip of the iceberg'. MHCT's role in Tasmania is diverse, intensive and significant.

Furthermore, expectations from government, our members, the mental health sector more broadly, and Tasmanian communities continues to grow for MHCT to provide more - more sound policy analysis, more consultation and feedback opportunities, more learning and awareness opportunities, more advice and systemic advocacy - all within a complex policy environment that can often expand well beyond the mental health and health system. Examples include: youth justice reform; child and youth wellbeing, Healthy Tasmania and Ageing Well strategies; housing reform, AOD systemic work and requirements for thoughtful contributions to various Parliamentary Inquiries and calls for submissions, at both State and Commonwealth levels.

Additionally, MHCT continues to urge government and their agencies to maintain and progress its stated commitment to address the ongoing demand for psychosocial supports outside the NDIS, as outlined in the [National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement](#), including prioritising a comprehensive state-by-state gap analysis to define and determine the scope and level of need in each jurisdiction.

Within this multidimensional policy and reform landscape, MHCT's ongoing capacity and sustainability must be guaranteed, given our unique role as the peak body representing the community mental health sector in our state. MHCT fulfills the role of a peak body, and in addition informally undertakes and delivers much of the role and work of a Mental Health Commission in our state (with Tasmania the only Australian state without such a Commission in place), driving and monitoring ongoing reform towards an integrated mental health system.

Increased core funding, with appropriate annual indexation applied (including addressing the need to increase MHCT's current funding contract indexation arrangements) will provide a guaranteed, ongoing income and a means to 'future proof' the Council and our pivotal interface role between government and the community mental health sector. MHCT can then continue to effectively respond, expand and deliver to meet current and ongoing reform agendas and efforts towards mental health system improvement and integration.

Additional core funding will also enable MHCT to compete within a challenging recruitment environment to secure the necessary workforce required to guarantee ongoing, trusted advice to provide the Tasmanian government and agencies with sufficient insight into the gaps, challenges and issues impacting on Tasmanians' mental health and wellbeing.

Increased core funding will allow MHCT to meet its growing responsibilities and provide ongoing capacity and resourcing for media and communications work. This includes a focus on promotion, prevention and early intervention, significant policy and research contributions, our mental health sector reform function (which currently has a 12-month funding cycle) and suicide prevention and workforce coordination needs (see *c. Addressing Tasmanian Mental Health Workforce Concerns*).

MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL OF TASMANIA CORE FUNDING - INVESTMENT RATIONALE

State Government to increase investment in MHCT's physical human resourcing via an annual core funding increase to secure the Council's ongoing capacity to support the community mental health sector, and reform interface role with the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments and agencies including Primary Health Tasmania.

FURTHER INVESTMENT REQUESTED

MHCT core funding increase of **\$517,750** over five years from 2023 (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs).

In addition, rectify and apply an appropriate annual indexation of 5% (currently 3%) to MHCT's current core funding agreement **\$179,581** (2023 to 2027).

b. Supporting the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy

Much has been done in Tasmania to progress and implement the second [2016-2020 Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy](#). At the time of writing, the third *2023-2027 Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy* (TSPS) is in final development and will be released on 30 November 2022. The successful implementation of the third TSPS relies on 'localising' national initiatives to ensure they provide tailored support to Tasmanian communities, but currently there are insufficient mechanisms in place to support this effectively. To support implementation in this complex suicide prevention and mental health environment, impartial and coordinated leadership is required across all levels of government and agencies. MHCT as the mental health peak body is well-placed to support this work.

Both [Rethink 2020](#) and the Tasmanian suicide prevention strategies prioritise promotion, prevention and early intervention (PPEI) approaches. MHCT's [Tasmanian Communications Charter](#), developed and delivered by MHCT in 2019 and funded by State Government, provides a ready-made, state-based tailored platform with a proven track record, ready to support this PPEI approach in the mental health and suicide prevention space.

Additionally, and as a component of the *Communications Charter* project, MHCT worked collaboratively with the suicide prevention and mental health sector in Tasmania to develop and deliver the [Safely Talking Toolkit](#) of resources and a pilot training module, designed to guide safe discussions on suicide and suicide prevention. Due to the cessation of the project funding in June 2020, new investment is required to ensure their currency so the platform and resources can again effectively support the implementation of the third *Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy*. Without new funding for reinvigoration, the *Communications Charter* and *Safely Talking* resources will remain outdated and underutilised.

Conversations around mental health, suicide and suicide prevention are taking place in our communities at unprecedented levels, driven by the challenges presented by the pandemic and associated restrictions. Now, Tasmanians are navigating economic uncertainty including rising household costs, mortgage and rental stress, insufficient housing options, wages growth falling behind inflationary growth and continuing increases in energy costs.

There has never been a better time to capitalise on community engagement around questions of mental health, wellbeing, mental illness, suicide prevention and stigma reduction. The *Tasmanian Communications Charter* and *Safely Talking* programs can answer the call for more prevention and early intervention education, supports and resources, tailored to Tasmanian communities.

SUPPORTING THE TASMANIAN SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY - INVESTMENT RATIONALE

State Government to reinvest in the *Tasmanian Communications Charter* as a significant PPEI platform, suite of resources and training modules which will directly support the *Third 2023-2027 Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy* implementation.

Reinvestment over five years in a project officer role to support the Tasmanian Communications Charter platform, resources and promotion, and including a component of the year one budget directed towards the reinvigoration of the digital platform, resources and promotional collateral. Further development and delivery of the *Tasmanian Communications Charter 'Safely Talking'* training programs, as outlined in the *2023-2027 Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy*

FURTHER INVESTMENT REQUESTED

\$588,950 over five year (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs).

c. Addressing Tasmanian Mental Health Workforce Concerns

Given the significant investment into mental health in our state by the current State Government, whilst acknowledging Tasmania's already stretched and strained mental health workforce, MHCT reiterates the importance of ensuring a coordinated response not only to recruitment, but also the retention and development of the Tasmanian mental health workforce.

To achieve this, dedicated, visionary and long-term planning and resourcing must be prioritised and invested in to drive appropriate educational pathways and accessible skills training in Tasmania, including professional development, supervision and incentives to encourage graduates to remain in the state and within the mental health workforce.

MHCT notes the urgent need for a strong, coordinated focus on both clinical and non-clinical / community sector workforce development. MHCT acknowledges the work of the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program and State Government in convening the **Reform Recruitment for the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Sector Working Group** to map and track the recruitment requirements both current and future across the State, Commonwealth and mental health sector. MHCT also welcomes the collaboration between the State Government and the University of Tasmania (UTAS) to establish the [Centre for Mental Health Service Innovation](#).

As outlined in MHCT's previous [Budget Priority Submission 2022-2023](#), whilst the Working Group will undertake important work to monitor and determine the size and scope of mental health workforce needs, a dedicated resource is required to support the work in this space, to act as a liaison point between government and sector stakeholders and to implement actions on behalf of the Working Group.

MHCT again requests the funding of a dedicated Mental Health Workforce Coordinator to bring together integrated approaches and facilitate strategic partnerships between the mental health sector, government and agencies, education and training institutions along with mental health service providers, with a particular focus on growing a sustainable workforce in Tasmania's regional and rural communities. The establishment of the role will act as a cross-sector resource for workforce development to support community, public and private mental health workforce needs.

MHCT is well placed to house and support a Mental Health Workforce Coordinator role to act as a conduit and interface between government and the sector to implement actions and imperatives as identified by the Working Group, and to ensure a dedicated liaison and focus on whole of sector approaches (public, primary, private and community).

ADDRESSING TASMANIAN MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE CONCERNS – INVESTMENT RATIONALE

State Government to fund a Mental Health Workforce Coordinator, housed at MHCT, for five years to act as the liaison point between government and the sector to implement actions on behalf of The Reform Recruitment for the Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drug Sector Working Group.

FURTHER INVESTMENT REQUESTED

\$689,698 over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs)

d. Mental Health Week Grant Program and Community Achievement Award

Mental Health Week (MHW) in Tasmania is held each year in early October and is part of a national mental health promotion campaign incorporating World Mental Health Day, held globally on 10 October. The purpose of the awareness week is to engage Tasmanian communities in activities that promote mental health and wellbeing and raise awareness and understanding about mental illness and the value of good mental health and self-care. This year, MHW also offered the opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of people with lived experience of mental illness, while helping to raise awareness of the unique role they play in the recovery journey of consumers within our mental health system.

For over a decade, MHCT has coordinated Mental Health Week in Tasmania, delivering strong promotional content and supports, a growing and highly valued Grants program (funded by State Government), strong and vocal support across government, a Steering Committee rotated yearly to ensure diverse participation, significant media engagement and coverage, and increasingly growing engagement across social platforms, with Tasmanians and businesses posting their MHW plans activities, and sharing why the Week is so important to them.

This year-on-year growth in awareness and engagement comes from both the community perspective and from the mental health and health sectors. In addition, Tasmanian businesses now actively look forward to MHW, holding activities and utilising the Week as a means by which to 'check in' with their workforce, encourage wellbeing, celebrate connection and reduce stigma.

As a central activity of MHW, MHCT coordinates the Grants Program, developed to support community events during Mental Health Week. In 2022, the total request for MHW Grant funding from applicants was \$56,668 across 58 applications, a record number of applications, and strong demand for the Grants program continues to far exceed the funding amount of \$40,000 currently provided by The Tasmanian Department of Health.

It is important to note, however, that in order to manage both the funding shortfall and therefore an inability to meet requests, and to temper organisation/community expectations, this year MHCT scaled back the amount organisations could request through the MHW Grant process, given the demand has been far outstripping the funding amount. This approach is problematic, given the importance of growing grassroots events taking place in our communities right across the state during future MHWs, and noting the increasing costs of running such events falls directly onto the community mental health service providers as the organisers.

Grant applications are received from a range of stakeholder groups including Local Councils, State Government departments and services, not for profit organisations, Community Houses/Centres, schools or tertiary education providers and libraries across Tasmania.

MHCT requests an increase of the annual Mental Health Week Grant funding from \$40,000 to \$100,000 per annum, to meet community expectations for quality community events and engagement opportunities right across Tasmania during Mental Health Week to deliver lasting impact.

In addition, MHCT requests the establishment of an annual *Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award*, either as a stand-alone program, or established as a category within an existing Tasmanian awards program (for example, the creation of a category within the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance [MEAA] Tasmanian Media Awards). Alternatively, the above Award could align with the State Mental Health Service (SMHS) biannual 'Maggie Award', recently established to acknowledge exemplary care of consumers or outstanding contribution to SMHS services by any staff member or team.

The *Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award's* purpose will be to celebrate, share stories and acknowledge the achievements of individuals, groups or organisations working in the community mental health, stigma reduction and suicide prevention sectors each year during Mental Health Week.

MHCT requests \$20,000 per annum to support the coordination of the Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award promotion and nomination process, and delivery of the Award.

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK - INVESTMENT RATIONALE

Grow investment in Tasmania's primary mental health and wellbeing annual awareness activity. Support communities and organisations to celebrate Mental Health Week with grassroots events designed to connect communities, raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing and reduce stigma. Establish Tasmania's first dedicated community Mental Health Award to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate individuals, groups or organisations undertaking outstanding and impactful work to support mental health and Wellbeing.

FURTHER INVESTMENT REQUESTED

\$300,000 increased funding for the annual Mental Health Week Grants Program over five years.

\$100,000 funding over five years to support the coordination of the Mental Health Week Community Achievement Award promotion, nomination process and Award delivery.

2. Lived Experience Peer Training and Development Hub

In 2019, in partnership with the State Government and the mental health sector, MHCT delivered the [Peer Workforce Development Strategy](#), and a Mental Health Peer Workforce Coordinator was appointed to progress the Strategy's [Implementation Plan](#). The Coordinator, housed at MHCT, is jointly funded by the Tasmanian Department of Health and Primary Health Tasmania. The primary function of the Coordinator is to support the development of Tasmania's Lived Experience Peer Workforce.

Lived Experience Peer workers, with their personal lived experiences of mental health and mental illness, hold an unparalleled level of knowledge, understanding and expertise to provide advice, guidance and hope to both consumers and carers experiencing their own mental health journeys. Their lived experience is, in fact, the unique expertise they bring to their role. Lived Experience Peer workers assist in reducing stigma, while providing person-centred support, allowing Tasmanians to be supported by someone who has recovered from their own mental health experience.

Within the current policy setting, [Rethink 2020](#) and its implementation plan identified the critical need to establish a lived experience peer workforce in Tasmania as a priority action. In addition, the development of a lived experience peer workforce will support commitments made within the [Tasmanian Bilateral Agreement for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention](#) by creating a robust lived experience peer workforce as outlined in the [National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement](#).

MHCT requests financial investment from State Government and Primary Health Tasmania to establish and deliver a **Lived Experience Peer Training and Development Hub** (the Hub) for Tasmania. Currently, there is no established pathway for the development of this workforce, and a Hub will directly support the expansion and success of a professional, work-ready, Lived Experience Peer workforce. The centralised Hub will have a focus on providing entry level lived experience peer and supervisor training programs, with the capacity to provide year-round training (both onsite and online, ensuring access right across Tasmania) that responds to sector needs.

In addition to responding to the workforce needs of the mental health sector, the establishment of the Hub provides a strategic opportunity to work collaboratively with the Tasmanian alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector to deliver outcomes for their lived experience workforce. [The Reform Agenda for The Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector in Tasmania](#) identified

the need to develop the necessary workforce to build capacity for AOD service delivery and to strengthen client / consumer-centred approaches across the AOD service system. This includes the introduction of a lived experience peer workforce, to also provide person-centred support by someone with a lived experience of AOD use and the treatment system.

The establishment of the Hub provides an exceptional opportunity for MHCT and the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council (ATDC) to collaborate on lived experience peer workforce development. The Tasmanian AOD sector has been progressing several lived experience peer workforce initiatives, and through the Drug Education Network has developed and trialled AOD peer work training benchmarked against AOD specialist peer work competencies. The Hub provides an opportunity for the development of an inclusive approach to bring together the work undertaken to date in both sectors to create a specialised training module designed for delivery across the mental health and AOD sectors, together with co-facilitation opportunities. The ATDC and Drug Education Network both support this collaboration approach.

MHCT requests that the Hub is co-funded by State Government and PHT over a five-year period and recommends a phased and scalable approach to Hub development.

PHT has expressed its strong commitment to the collaborative development of a robust and sustainable mental health and AOD Lived Experience Peer workforce and recognises the establishment of a Training and Development Hub is a vital component to achieving this outcome. Following discussions with MHCT, PHT is working to understand what a co-funding arrangement for the Hub could look like. Proposed co-funding in the 2023-2024 BPS budget period will be used to establish the Hub, fund the delivery of the training programme in the South, North and Northwest and support the hub to scale up to a year-round training schedule. Any funding identified by PHT must be proportionately supported by State Government to ensure feasibility. Furthermore, whilst PHT resourcing from the Australian Government is almost exclusively for direct health service delivery, PHT has advised it is currently undertaking an internal process to identify and secure an ongoing financial commitment to the Hub as it scales up its footprint and deliverables during 2024, 2025 and beyond.

Significant activity towards scalable Hub development is already underway, constituting year one, with MHCT coordinating the development of a four-day training programme to be delivered as a pilot by MHCT's Lived Experience Workforce Coordinator on 22-25 November 2022 in Hobart.

- **Year two** (2023-2024 BPS budget period) will focus on the establishment of a physical Lived Experience Peer Training and Development Hub in Hobart, the delivery of the training program in the South, North and Northwest of the state, and additional training program development.
-
- **Years three to five** (2024-2026 budget period) will see further scaling up of Hub deliverables, its staffing and activities as outlined below, and the development and delivery of a year-round comprehensive training schedule calendar.

The Hub will provide direct pathways to an accredited TasTAFE Certificate IV training in peer work and an avenue for professional development of supervisors of Lived Experience Peer workers, thereby ensuring a strong leadership approach to supporting and sustaining an extensive Mental Health and AOD peer workforce in Tasmania. A Lived Experience Peer workforce will transform the landscape of mental health and AOD practice by creating professionals with the appropriate education and expertise required to maintain a sustainable and healthy workforce.

Objectives of the Hub include:

- Forming a resilient Lived Experience Peer Workforce through ongoing support and supervision, including the establishment of a professional community of practice for the Mental Health and AOD Lived Experience Peer Workforce
- Supporting managers and team leaders in mental health and AOD services with ongoing professional development and external coaching / leadership skills
- Ongoing professional development for the Mental Health and AOD Lived Experience Peer Workforce
- Education and support of facilitator and Lived Experience Peer career pathways, including offering external coaching for managers/supervisors
- Capacity to respond to sector needs and demands - local and adaptable training delivery, ability to respond to emergent skill requirements, targeting specific work ready skills
- Establishing career pathways from Mental Health and AOD Lived Experience Peer Worker to Lived Experience Peer Supervisor

Importantly, the Hub provides an opportunity for the State Government to collaborate with Primary Health Tasmania. Please note, detailed budgets for the Hub are available on request, and MHCT welcomes the opportunity to discuss the financial modelling in detail, including the proposed co-funding model.

LIVED EXPERIENCE PEER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT HUB – INVESTMENT RATIONALE

A lived experience Peer Training and Development Hub will support the introduction and increasing demand for mental health and AOD Lived Experience Peer Workers in Tasmania, and provide training, collegiate networks and career pathways for the workforce. Total investment is **\$2,919,555** over five years (includes 5% annual indexation and associated on-costs). MHCT requests that the Hub is co-funded by State Government and PHT over a five year period and recommends a phased and scalable approach to Hub development.

3. Mental Health Access and Affordability in Tasmania

Access and affordability of mental health services and supports is an ongoing and challenging situation across Tasmania. Every Tasmanian should have access to place-based, person-centred and affordable mental health care, regardless of their circumstances and location.

Unfortunately, however, many Tasmanians still face significant barriers to accessing affordable mental health care in our state. It is recognised and acknowledged within the sector, government and agencies that funding and service gaps, fragmentation, workforce challenges, long wait times and a dearth of services in rural and remote locations are all contributing factors and must urgently be addressed. This is an issue in need of particularly urgent exploration and action to arrest potentially detrimental impacts on service provision for Tasmanians.

In September 2022, MHCT conducted a state-wide consultation with its member organisations to better understand and map access and affordability issues affecting mental health services in Tasmania, in particular the impact of inflation and inadequate indexation across funding agreements on mental health service provision. MHCT will launch the findings of this consultation in the Access and Affordability in Tasmania: Report 1 on 29 November 2022.

Member respondents reported very low rates of indexation on State and Commonwealth government funding agreements, with no indexation applied to 35% of 2022/23 budgets, and 92% of surveyed members reporting indexation of 3% or below. Additionally, MHCT has been advised by some providers that they have historically received no indexation increases or reviews on some 'legacy' funding agreements for several years, with some agreements having no indexation built in at all. When asked what the ideal increase to their baseline funding to support provision of mental health services would be, all mental health service provider respondents requested an increase of at least 5%.

Myriad inflationary factors and inadequate indexation are placing significant pressure on already strained community and private mental health service providers. Inconsistent, and in some cases, non-existent indexation across funding agreements for service providers means the sector is effectively 'doing more for less', and without annual indexing applied, funding contracts are no longer aligned with inflation and the national increase in wages and superannuation. Service providers predict that if the situation persists, changes will be required to maintain service viability including modified or reduced services, further FTE reductions and in some cases a need to pass additional costs onto Tasmanian consumers.

MHCT requests 5% annual indexation be applied across all existing and new mental health service provider funding agreements going forward, to provide surety of responsible indexation across these agreements. This increase is in line with increases across other jurisdictions and has been reinforced through feedback received during our consultation process with

Tasmanian service providers. MHCT also notes that due to the instability of the economic landscape, this indexation increase will need to be reviewed regularly to ensure it retains currency and appropriately addresses need.

MHCT also acknowledges, and is supporting, research underway to understand and develop a transparent, appropriate indexation model that responds more effectively to inflation and can be reviewed annually as part of an established, consistent process between government and contracted agencies.

In addition to adequate indexation, MHCT continues to request, on behalf of our service providers, a move away from short-term to multi-year funding contracts. Further to this, our service providers note that renewal notice time can in some cases be a matter of weeks (or in some reported cases, occurring after the initial contract has ended), which also significantly impacts on organisations' ability to effectively forward plan, attract and retain the necessary workforce, maintain morale and provide continuity of service.

The State Government have stated their commitment to providing long-term funding contracts for community service organisations, most recently in the [Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Final Report](#) in March 2021 (Recommendation 43). Five-year funding contracts will support service providers' ability to achieve long-term and strategic planning, workforce development to ensure the recruitment and retention of a high-quality workforce, and outstanding delivery of programs and services.

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY IN TASMANIA - INVESTMENT RATIONALE

Government to urgently address access and affordability to ensure every Tasmanian has access to place-based, person-centred, equitable and affordable mental health care, regardless of their circumstances and location.

FURTHER INVESTMENT REQUESTED

Governments and agencies to apply 5% annual indexation across all existing and new mental health service provision funding contracts for Tasmanian service providers.

Five-year government funding contracts for all community and private mental health service providers, which will provide security to support service provision, invest in an adequate workforce including recruitment and retention, and to support organisational planning. There has been a stated commitment from State Government to progress this for some time, but to date it has not been enacted.

References

Department of Health Tasmania (2016) *Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2020; Working Together to Prevent Suicide*, accessed November 2022:

https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/Suicide_Prevention_Strategy_2016-20_DoHTasmania2016.pdf

Federal Financial Relations (undated). *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement*, accessed October 2022:

https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2022-05/nmh_suicide_prevention_agreement.pdf

Federal Financial Relations (undated). *Bilateral Schedule on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention: Tasmania*, accessed October 2022:

https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2022-05/nmh_sp_bilateral_agreement_tas.PDF

Mental Health Council of Tasmania (2021) *Prioritising the Implementation of Rethink 2020, Budget Priority Submission 2022-2023*, accessed October 2022:

<https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MHCT-BPS-2022-2023.pdf>

Mental Health Council of Tasmania (2019), *Lived Experience Workforce Development Strategy*, accessed October 2022:

https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MHCT_PWDS-Web.pdf

Mental Health Council of Tasmania (2022), *Lived Experience Workforce Development Strategy Implementation Plan*, accessed October 2022:

<https://mhct.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Lived-Experience-Workforce-Development-Strategy-Implementation-Plan-May2022.pdf>

Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council, *Final Report, March 2021*. Accessed November 2022:

https://www.pesrac.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/283196/Final_Report_WCAG2.pdf

Primary Health Tasmania (2020) *Rethink 2020*, accessed October 2022:

https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/Rethink_2020_state_plan_2020-25_DoHTasmania.pdf

Mental Health Alcohol and Drug Directorate, Department of Health Tasmania. *Reform Agenda for The Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector in Tasmania*. Accessed November 2022:

https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/AOD_Reform_Agenda_DoHTasmania2020.pdf

Tasmanian Communications Charter www.tascharter.org accessed November 2022:

<https://www.tascharter.org>

Tasmanian Communications Charter, Safely Talking Toolkit, accessed November 2022

<https://www.tascharter.org/safely-talking-toolkit/>