



**Mental  
Health  
Council**  
OF TASMANIA

[www.mhct.org](http://www.mhct.org)

# Annual Review 2022–23

→ A leading voice in the Tasmanian mental health system



**Mental  
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 the land on which we work. We recognise and value their rich and continuing connection to country, to land, water and culture, and pay respects to Elders past and present.*

*We acknowledge people with lived experience of mental ill-health and recovery and we recognise our work relies upon valuing, respecting, and drawing upon the lived experience and expert knowledge of consumers, their families, carers and friends, service providers, their staff, and local communities.*

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# Contents

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<b>CEO UPDATE</b>	2
.....	
<b>MHCT CHAIR REPORT</b>	4
.....	
<b>OUR TEAM</b>	6
.....	
<b>WHO WE ARE</b>	8
.....	
<b>WHAT WE DO</b>	8
.....	
<b>OUR MEMBERS 2022-2023</b>	16
.....	

# CEO Update

CEO, Connie Digolis



Connie Digolis, CEO

The Mental Health Council over the past year has been busy working to highlight the pressing concerns of our members, and amplify the voices of the many Tasmanians they work to support.

After significant consultation with our member organisations throughout 2022, we produced the first in a pair of Access and Affordability reports in November. The report outlined a number of issues raised by our members, but perhaps the most pertinent was the lack of adequate indexation applied to contracts, significantly impacting their ability to provide supports and services.

High inflation has led to significant jumps in operating costs, but the widening gap between inflation and the indexation that organisations receive on contracts has meant that, in real terms, funding for these vital services has decreased.

At the same time, we've seen demand for mental health supports and services rapidly increase. This has meant that organisations are essentially being asked to do more with less.

To inform our second Access and Affordability report, we asked people who access services to share their experience through several focus groups and an online survey. This echoed many of the sentiments that we'd heard from the work with our members – that rising costs and demand are making it increasingly difficult to access supports when they're needed, and even when someone is able to access them they're often unaffordable.

Additionally, very few people were offered an interim support while they waited for appointments, with many people waiting 6 months or more.

We continue to leverage the findings of these reports throughout our advocacy work, talking to representatives from both State and Federal Governments about these pressing concerns, and the very real consequences of not addressing them as a matter of priority.

In more positive news, the State Budget in May included an exciting announcement of funding for a 'Lived Experience Training and Development Hub'. The development of Tasmania's peer workforce is something MHCT and our members have been advocating for over many years now. We know that a strong Lived Experience Workforce brings significant benefits to the community mental health sector, and leads to better outcomes for the people and families that access mental health supports and services in Tasmania.

We have since been working with partners across the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors to determine exactly what the Hub will look like and how it will operate, as well as the range of opportunities it will create for people with lived experience, and the services across our sectors.



## → influencing mental health reform and system improvement



We are looking forward to officially launching the Hub in early 2024. Until then we will continue to work with the sector to develop and design training which will help to build organisational readiness, and provide supervisors and leaders the skills they need to effectively support and manage Lived Experience Workforce roles.

The past 12 months have seen us ramp up our advocacy for an increased focus on prevention, promotion and early intervention. This will continue to build over the next 12 months as well. One exciting example of this work is a campaign we're developing which is set to launch in November. The campaign will take a strength-based approach, helping Tasmanians understand what good mental health and wellbeing looks like, and some of the tools and resources they have available that can help them achieve it. It will change the conversation from one that has traditionally only focused on recognising and seeking support when things aren't going well, to one that encourages people to take a proactive approach and do things that are good for their mental wellbeing before they notice a dip in their mental health.

With all of the things that have been happening, our team has grown over the last year, so much so that we had to move to a new office! We moved in February and have since settled into our new location and have been flourishing with the extra space and light. This couldn't have been achieved without the support of the MHCT Board, and of course my incredible team who, through their exceptional breadth and depth of work, have helped to highlight not only the vital role of MHCT, but also of the many organisations across our sector who support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians.

**Connie Digolis**

CEO

Mental Health Council of Tasmania

### CONNECTIONS

**3,358** ➤ Facebook followers

**405** ➤ Instagram followers



### ENEWS SUBSCRIBERS

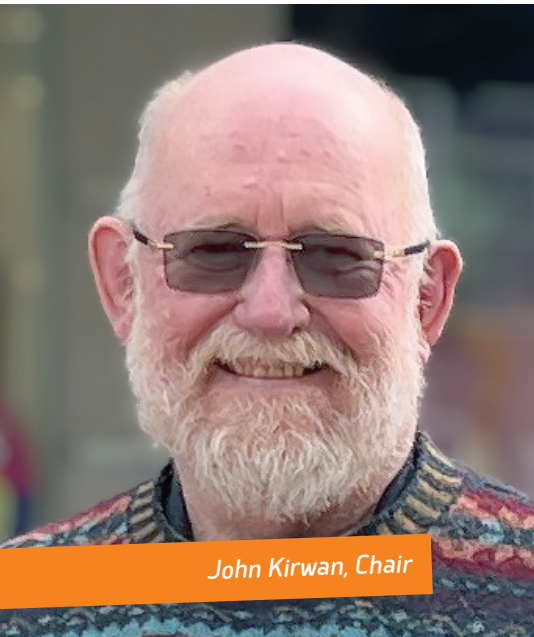
**208** ➤ Members

**804** ➤ General subscribers

**1,012** ➤ Total subscribers

# MHCT Chair Report

John Kirwan



John Kirwan, Chair

The work of MHCT and its members over the past year has highlighted that mental health supports in Tasmania are not only difficult to access they are also becoming increasingly unaffordable.

At a time when a combination of difficult social and economic factors are having an increasing impact on the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, this is particularly concerning. If people are unable to access affordable supports when and where they need them, then there is a very real risk that their mental health will continue to decline while they wait, requiring increasingly complex and costly interventions and leading to worse outcomes. The need for a strong preventive approach remains critical.

We also know that an increasing number of people are falling “in the gap”, unable to access psychosocial supports outside of the NDIS.

MHCT has been working closely with other peaks across the country, advocating to State and Federal Governments for increased investment in psychosocial supports for people who fall outside of the NDIS.

This is a joint responsibility between the Commonwealth Government and State and Territory Governments as part of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, but at this stage we’re seeing little action from either side.

A national analysis of the scope of the gap is underway, and due to be completed in early 2024. But this will miss the next State and Commonwealth budget cycles, while people are missing out on the supports they need now.

Work is already underway in other States, and in some instances has already been completed, to determine the number of people missing out in their own jurisdiction. We must act on this data sooner rather than later, otherwise there is a very real risk that people will become increasingly unwell, requiring increasingly acute levels of care, while they wait for the gap to be closed and for necessary psychosocial supports to be funded, implemented and available.



## MHCT WEBSITE



29,033

pageviews



12,003

visitors

While the reality of this type of advocacy is that progress is often slow, I am reassured knowing that Connie and her team are working tirelessly to help create a better mental health system, and better mental health outcomes for all Tasmanians.

It is the collective voices of so many member organisations, individuals and communities that MHCT represents across the state, that gives weight and credence to our calls for governments to invest in a better mental health system for all Tasmanians.

Thanks also to my fellow MHCT Board members. It is through your support and guidance that MHCT's strategic direction has never been more relevant and important.

**John Kirwan**

Chair

Mental Health Council of Tasmania

## OUR BOARD

**John Kirwan**

Chair

**James Versteegen**

Treasurer

**Naomi Walsh**

Board Member

**Paul Campbell**

Board Member

**Dianne Hawkrige**

Board Member

**Kate Chambers**

Board Member

**Lee-Anne Carter**

Board Member



## MEDIA

51

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

## MENTAL HEALTH WEEK 2022

8-16 OCTOBER 2022

\$40,000 grant funds distributed to 45 organisations. More than 80 events were held across the state.

# Our Team

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**Bree Klerck**

*Sector Development Coordinator*



**Bridget Wallbank**

*Youth Mental Health Access*



**Ella Bellamy**

*Policy Support Officer*



**Emily Carter**

*Administration &  
Communications Officer*



**John McNamara**

*Community Capacity Building -  
South*



**Laura Cini**

*Mental Health & Wellbeing  
Coordinator*





**Nick Sullivan**

*Communications Manager*



**Rhiannon Hamilton**

*Project Support Officer*



**Sally Errey**

*Stakeholder Engagement Lead*



**Shareen Pearson**

*Corporate Services Manager*



**Trudy Schmitzer**

*Lived Experience Workforce  
Coordinator*

#### **FORMER TEAM MEMBERS**

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**Julie Martin**

*Advocacy and Communications  
Advisor (until June 2023)*

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**Naomi Thomson**

*Policy and Research Officer  
(until April 2023)*

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**Sam Bigwood**

*Community Capacity Building -  
North (until May 2023)*

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## Who we are



The Mental Health Council of Tasmania is the peak body representing the mental health and wellbeing needs of all Tasmanians, and the community organisations that work with and support them. We work closely with government to amplify the voices of our members and Tasmanian communities, to provide 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



Over the past year MHCT has continued our focus on improving the mental health system so that all Tasmanians have access to the supports they need. This has included our continued work in supporting current mental health reforms through representing the community and our members in 29 committees and working groups.



Our reports and budget priority submissions reiterate the impacts that inflation has had on our member's capacity to deliver quality services to the community. MHCT will continue to progress this issue with both state and federal governments in the year ahead, whilst focusing on the impacts that inflation has had on the cost of living and subsequent impacts on Tasmanians mental wellbeing and capacity to access mental health services.

## SUBMISSIONS AND REPORTS

JULY 2022

**Response** to the Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2022-27

JULY 2022

**Response** to the consultation on the draft Housing Tasmania Bill 2022

JULY 2022

**Scoping Report:** News media reporting on mental health, mental illness and suicide in Tasmania

OCTOBER 2022

**Response** to the discussion paper on the Tasmanian Housing Strategy

NOVEMBER 2022

**Access and Affordability: Report 1:** Impacts of Inflationary Pressures on Mental Health Service Provision

NOVEMBER 2022

**State Budget Priority Submission** 2023/2024

FEBRUARY 2023

**Response** Draft National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy

FEBRUARY 2023

**Federal Budget Priority Submission** 2023/24 (via CMHA)

FEBRUARY 2023

**Response to Consultation Paper 1 – Approach** to Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) Article 4

MARCH 2023

**Response** to Out of Home Care Case Management Model Investigation

MARCH 2023

**Harmonising Language** for the Tasmanian Peer/Lived Experience Workforce Report

APRIL 2023

**Submission** to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Tasmanian Adult Imprisonment and Youth Detention Matters

Check out [mhct.org/resource-library/](https://mhct.org/resource-library/) for all these submissions, reports, and more.

## PRIORITY AREA ONE: SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

### COMMITTEES ETC. THAT WE SAT ON/REPRESENTED AT:

- ▶ State Mental Health Services Reform Steering Group
- ▶ Older Persons Mental Health Service Project Control Group
- ▶ Mental Health Integration Hub Partnership Group
- ▶ Recovery College Advisory Group
- ▶ Premier's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Council
- ▶ Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Leadership Group
- ▶ Department of Health, Primary Health Tasmania, MHCT Executive Group
- ▶ Primary Health Tasmania and MHCT Sector Reform Working Group
- ▶ Rethink Working Group
- ▶ Mental Health Act Review
- ▶ Reform Recruitment Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drugs Working Group
- ▶ Community Services Industry Workforce Network + Steering Committee
- ▶ Workplace Mental Health Framework
- ▶ Premier's Health and Wellbeing Advisory Council
- ▶ Community Mental Health Australia Executive Leadership Group
- ▶ Community Mental Health Australia Policy Network
- ▶ National Psychosocial Support Advocacy Group
- ▶ Smoke Free Communities Steering Communities
- ▶ Regional Recovery Committees
- ▶ Volunteering Tasmania Mental Health Project Steering Committee
- ▶ Huon Valley Health and Wellbeing Committee & MH Focus Group
- ▶ Break O'Day MHPN and West Coast Service providers
- ▶ Clarence Council Cultural Access and Inclusion Network
- ▶ Gambling Harm Reform
- ▶ UTAS Return to Work Project
- ▶ Literacy & Health Literacy
- ▶ Tasmanian Youth Forum Steering Committee
- ▶ MHWL Project Steering Committee
- ▶ Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Community Network (TSPCN)



## 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

### MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING LITERACY CAMPAIGN

In October MHCT started the initial phases of developing a whole of population campaign, designed to build the mental health and wellbeing literacy of all Tasmanians. The campaign will be focused on promotion and prevention – focusing more on what good mental health and wellbeing looks like and the things we can do to achieve it, instead of the traditional mental health campaign approach which helps people recognise when they're struggling and how to respond.

We have already developed relationships with 175 stakeholders from a range of clubs, communities and organisations. These conversations are helping shape the campaign, with a goal of leveraging their strengths and tapping into their local knowledge to build a campaign that responds to the different needs and nuances across the Tasmania.

We are working with research partners from the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute, experts in mental health promotion and behavioral change. They will be assisting with the development and evaluation of the campaign based on current best evidence, using behavioural change strategies to underpin delivery of the positive messaging.

Over the past eight months, our project team has been busy getting out to communities across the state to meet with stakeholders, doing an environmental scan of existing services and any current mental health literacy initiatives in Tasmania, to ensure our campaign compliments them. Our research partners were in Tasmania in March to help conduct focus groups and community meetings.

Our next steps are to develop a partnership framework, engage a creative agency to work with us to help bring the campaign to life, and begin the campaign delivery phase. We look forward to sharing more about the campaign with our members and stakeholders as it develops.

### MENTAL WELLBEING ≠ MENTAL ILLNESS

#### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Understanding the signs and symptoms of being here is important!

*High mental illness symptoms*

*High level of wellbeing*

#### MENTAL WELLBEING LITERACY

But it's not the same as understanding how to get here.

*Low mental illness symptoms*

*Low level of wellbeing*

Keyes, 2005; Iasiello, van Agteren, Muir-Cochrane 2020



## PRIORITY AREA THREE: WORKFORCE

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

### LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE

During 2022/23 we have made great progress on the Lived Experience Workforce Development Strategy, not least of which was the announcement of funding for a Lived Experience Training and Development Hub (the Hub) in the 2023/24 State Budget.



In the lead up to and since that announcement, much of MHCT's focus has been on supporting the existing lived experience workforce and working with them to co-design the Fundamentals in Peer Work course. In November 2022, a group of peer workers from THS, Salvation Army, Butterfly Foundation and Baptcare piloted a four-day version of the course and provided valuable feedback for the ongoing development. Since then, we have provided training to over 30 people across a series of single-day sessions which run through parts of the Fundamentals course.

More recently we have been developing tools which will assist organisations to integrate and embed Lived Experience roles and processes. This is important work, which will effectively assist organisations to leverage the vast array of skills and knowledge that come with Lived Experience roles to create the best possible experience for people accessing their supports and services, as well and their friends and family who support them to do so.

This work is ongoing and will be rolled out once the Hub is up and running in 2024.

*"I have been a social work student for 3 years. I learnt more about trauma today in 6 hours than I have through my entire university course"*

– Student 2023.

In February we held a "Harmonising Language" Workshop, bringing together people with lived experience and representatives from a range of organisations. As demand for a Lived Experience Workforce increases across numerous sectors, this was an important step in developing some common goals that facilitate a robust and sustainable Lived Experience workforce in Tasmania. We will also leverage the outcomes of this workshop to help build a narrative that promotes the benefits of this workforce to the our sector and the many people who come in contact with it. This will be crucial in our ongoing advocacy for investment in the Lived Experience Workforce in Tasmania.



## PRIORITY AREA THREE: WORKFORCE

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

**A key focus this year** was the initial phase of the Youth Peer Work Project, which seeks to provide young people with trained age-peer workers who have the appropriate skills and understanding to support them during challenging times. This project aims to see young people learning from one another, strengthening their connection to each other and their communities and equipping themselves to move through life with the confidence to respond to adversity where it arises. With young people empowered and supported, we hope to see a shift in Tasmania that sees mental ill-health being managed proactively rather than reactively.

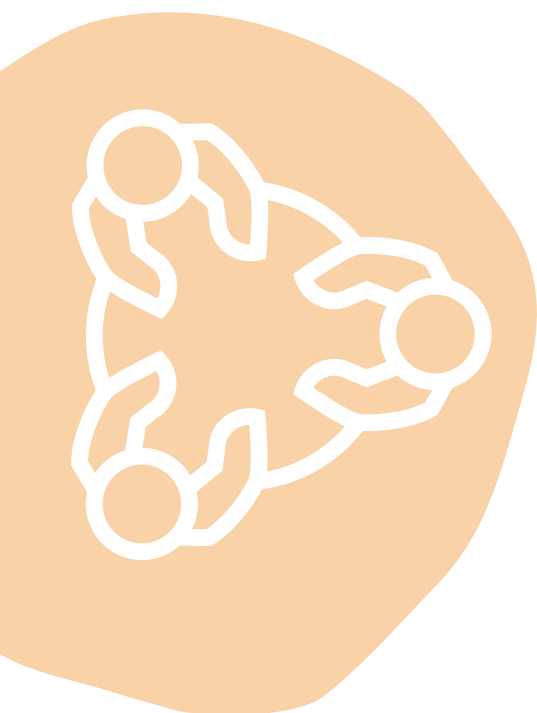


During the first six months the focus was on undertaking a scan of the existing Youth Peer Work programs available across Australia and internationally. We also heard from over 60 young people across the state about their mental wellbeing needs, and how Youth Peer Worker programs could be designed to best support their unique experiences. This initial scoping stage was an important first step, learning from other projects what works well and what doesn't.

This early consultation fed into the next stage of the project, setting up a co-design team comprised of young people, and carers of young people, to consolidate the findings and establish key goals for a Youth Peer Work Implementation Plan. The members, on secondment from The Link in Hobart and Mental Health Families and Friends, have worked collaboratively and with passion to help deliver the Implementation Plan which complements our 2019 Lived Experience Workforce Development Strategy.

In response to our 2021 Youth Mental Health Services State-wide Consultation Report, three regional communities of practice for youth mental health services and associated services were established in September – one each in the North, North West and the South. Each group has representation from clinical mental health services, multi-disciplinary youth services, government departments and other services with goals to increase collaboration, utilise sector wisdom and improve the experiences of young people accessing mental health support in Tasmania.

The groups came together in Campbell Town in November to hear from Dr Joanna Henderson about the Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario (YWHO), which Dr Henderson has been instrumental in establishing and growing over the last 7 years. Using Dr Henderson's work as inspiration, the groups identified the key priorities and current roadblocks to improving service delivery for young people in their regions. The groups will continue to focus on establishing priorities, identifying sector trends, collective learning for the remainder of 2023.



## PRIORITY AREA FOUR: MEMBERSHIP

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

It's been a busy year in the Stakeholder Engagement and Membership space with lots of consultation and conversation taking place, resulting in some key advocacy and policy development work. Specific Member updates and survey requests have been sent on topics such as Lived Experience, Suicide Prevention, Rethink 2020, Mental Health Week Grants, and the latest report on Access and Affordability.

MHCT engages with the sector monthly via Member and Subscriber eNews which includes updates and reports on mental health news, consultation, and engagement opportunities in local, state, and national initiatives.

Networking and engagement opportunities have also been made available at several MHCT member and stakeholder engagement events throughout the year, including 4 Tasmanian Mental Health Leaders Forums, 9 Regional Mental Health Group meetings (Hobart, Burnie, Launceston), statewide Mental Health Week events, our speaking event with international mental health expert Dr Joanna Henderson and the Annual General Meeting. Conversations at these events lead to further project, consultation and policy work helping to inform representation and advocacy on behalf of our valued Members.

### 67 MHCT MEMBERS



**40**

member  
organisations



**17**

individual  
members



**10**

associate  
members

In March and April of 2023 MHCT surveyed members and stakeholders regarding engagement with MHCT. We are pleased to see such positive results and plan to continue our engagement efforts.

**86%**

► of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the frequency of communication from MHCT.

**83%**

► of respondents were satisfied (60%) or very satisfied (23%) with the opportunities for engagement and input with MHCT.

**87%**

► of people agreed or highly agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the level of communication and engagement on relevant mental health sector issues".

**93%**

► of respondents agreed (28%) or highly agreed (65%) that they felt comfortable engaging with MHCT with regard to sector news and issues via email, phone or at meetings.

**Stakeholder Engagement** has also expanded out to community groups, other peak bodies, local government, literacy groups, researchers and committees as MHCT begins to expand Mental health literacy and understanding in Tasmania. We hope to learn from and leverage these stakeholder relationships to increase the reach and impact of future mental wellbeing campaigns.

► **We would like to acknowledge** the commitment of our members and stakeholders in their tireless provision of services and supports to our Tasmanian communities. MHCT looks forward to continuing our work with you to advance the goals of the sector and enhance the mental wellbeing of all Tasmanians.



# Our Members 2022–2023

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 RedCross

Baptcare

Bethlehem House

Catholic Care

Choose Life Services

Colony 47

CoRES Australia

Cornerstone Youth Services  
(Hearspace Launceston)

Flourish

GROW

iTrain Australia

Karitane

Langford Support Services

Life Without Barriers

Lifeline Tasmania

Live Well Tasmania

Men's Resources Tasmania

Mental Health Family & Friends

Migrant Resource Centre

Mindfulness Programs Australasia

Mission Australia

Positive Solutions

Psychology CAFFE

Relationships Australia

Richmond Fellowship (RFT)

Royal Flying Doctor Service

Rural Alive and Well (RAW)

Rural Health Tasmania Inc.

Salvation Army

Seedwings Art Therapy

Stride

Teen Challenge Tasmania

The Hobart Clinic

The LINK (Hearspace Hobart)

Wellways

Working It Out

yourtown - Kids Helpline

Youth, Family & Community  
Connections (YFCC)



## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Daryl Lamb (Life Member)

Patrick Carlisle (Life Member)

Diana Taylor

Graeme Lynch AM

Kate Griggs

Maree McCulley

Laura Grattidge

Mallory Schipper

Mark Davis

Matt Hill

Michelle Swallow

Paul Quilliam

Prathipraj Devaraj

Renate Hughes

Ross Barwick

Therese Ryan

Vicki Plummer

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

APM Employment Services

Asthma Australia, Tasmanian Office

Carers Tasmania

Epilepsy Tasmania

Healthy Business

Pharmacy Guild of Australia  
Tasmania Branch

Salveo Healthcare Services

TasTAFE

Triple P International (Positive  
Parenting Program)

Well Minds Work







## Annual Review 2022-23

### CONTACT US

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Hobart 7000  
Tasmania

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