



Telephone 03 9076 4713
Email: isfaf@alfred.org.au
Website: ispaf.org
Waiora Clinic, Level 2
435 Malvern Road
SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141

August 2015

Penny's last Newsletter was headed 'Winter 2015'. She commenced the Newsletter by writing about our dry gardens and the hope that spring and the blooming of blossoms and bulbs were just around the corner.

It's still winter, but so much has happened since then. And I don't mean just that the blossom and bulbs are in flower.

Penny has resigned as Convenor of ISFAF. Whilst we all wish her well, I think I speak for all of us when I say we wish she hadn't resigned. Her loss is enormous.

Penny's many years – I think eight – at the helm of ISFAF has increased our membership for good reason. She has attended so many seminars, meetings and groups that they are far too numerous to mention, learning as much as she can about our needs, the needs of our loved ones and acting as an ambassador for us all, showing clinicians, services, government agencies, and the world at large that we do not deserve to be stigmatized. She has been a great personal support to many of us when we needed help. Her guidance, hard work and organisation behind each of our meetings have ensured their continued success. The meetings have been useful to us both from an educational standpoint, but also as a means of mutual support. To choose and manage a never-ending range of excellent speakers is a great achievement. And I haven't even mentioned those perfect sandwiches yet!

Penny – I am sure I speak for all members – we will all miss your guidance, leadership and the help you have personally given to many of us. Thank you for your many years of dedication to us.

Because I'm a greenhorn and only took up the post of convenor a week or so ago, this will be a short newsletter, but I felt that I should introduce myself and to let you know that the group will continue in similar fashion, with Penny remaining on committee to provide the guidance that I look forward to.

We have some great programmes planned for the rest of this year and are in the process of planning 2016.

Members have made excellent suggestions for next year and my committee and I look forward to your input. Please think about what you would like and let me know your ideas.

In her last newsletter, Penny reminded us about the excellent courses being run by MIND. I can't recommend them highly enough. For those of you with computer access, full details are available at:

<http://www.mindaustralia.org.au/assets/docs/Resources/MRC-course-guide-July-Dec-web.pdf> and also at:

<http://recoverycollege.org.au/courses/melbourne.html>

If you don't have internet access, call them on 8698 4060 or 1300 286 463.

There are a variety of courses, including training in Assertiveness, Mindfulness, Food and Well-being, Coping Strategies, Skills for Mental Health (including understanding the medical, social issues and dealing with the system and services), Happiness, Spirituality, Personal Development, Creative Knitting, Creative Writing, Nature, Coping with Christmas, Peer workers, Emotional Intelligence, Bipolar issues, Depression, Models of Madness (which is presented by Sue Johnson, one of our members). Though the office has shifted to Heidelberg, the courses I have mentioned are readily accessible at Cheltenham.

AUGUST AGM 2015

We thank Marlene and the Carmelite Centre in Middle Park for enabling us to hold our AGM in such lovely surroundings and thank committee members for the sumptuous supper.

Other than the tragic loss of Penny as convenor, our committee remains essentially unchanged, with ten hard-working individuals:

Marlene Carlin, Diane Hunt, Sue Johnson (a lecturer at MIND Recovery College) Maureen King, Robin Kitching, Penny Lewisohn, Violeta Peterson (Carer Consultant Alfred Psychiatry) Frances Scholtz, Margaret Thorpe, Judi Burstynier (Convenor).

We each attend meetings whenever we can, so please make yourselves known to us and let us know what we can do for ISFAF to fill your needs regarding

mental health education, services and support. We are planning our functions for 2016 so if you have suggestions, now is the time to let us know. We look forward to your input.

AUGUST SPEAKER

Professor John Read's address to us at our August (AGM) meeting provoked much discussion, thought and it seems introduced many to what they considered controversial in relation to mental illness in general and psychosis in particular.

I had come across John's work via the International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis (ISPS) when I suggested him as a speaker early this year. At the time, I had no inkling that I would become convenor.

John's view of the importance of trauma being at the centre of psychosis, with far less emphasis on genetics came as a surprise to some of our members. His opposition to what he believes to be the overuse of medication due to the influence of pharmaceutical money on the teaching and understanding of mental distress was heard with a sigh of relief from some members of the audience, but with scepticism by others.

These concepts are discussed in detail in his book 'Models of Madness', which is in our library. It is very worthwhile reading, with widespread, sound research supporting his views.

Some of you have come across Peter Goetzsche whose book is I think also in our library. Dr Goetzsche was in Melbourne in February 2015 and I think Penny and a couple of members attended his speech. In 1993, he co-founded The Cochrane Collaboration, to which John referred in his speech to us. Cochrane Reviews are globally accepted to be the gold standard for the review of medical research data in all fields of medicine. Dr Goetzsche's work has been cited over 15,000 times in scientific literature. His new book is due for release shortly and he may be visiting Melbourne after its release. If not, one of his talks is likely to be available on the net and I will keep you informed.

His last talk was available on the net, but I can't find it currently. Perhaps one of our members could search for it and share the link with us.

It is somewhat of a co-incidence that John, whose views were seen as controversial by some members, was the speaker when I took up the position of convenor. Clearly medication has had many useful benefits for many.

However, medication has some disastrous effects also. The benefits of 'psychological and social approaches' are clearly supported by a wide variety of sources. The use of psychosocial assistance may be a key to minimizing the harm done by medication. Of

course, the pharmaceutical industry does what it has to – ie promote the interests of their shareholders to increase profits. This means that a great deal more money goes into education and promotion of the medical model than into promoting psychosocial approaches.

To explore psychosocial approaches further, I have invited Philip Benjamin whom I also met through ISPS (International Approaches to Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis). Philip's initial background is as a psychiatric nurse, but his achievements in teaching individuals about the nature of mental distress is enormous. He has family in Melbourne and will fortunately be arriving in Melbourne for a very short visit on the day of our October meeting. We are extremely lucky for this as he may be relocating overseas, so the opportunity to hear him is 'ordained by the gods'. Please come and ask lots of question.

INTERNET and EMAIL

If you are receiving this Newsletter by post, it means we don't have your email address or you have specifically asked us to mail you hard copy, rather than email it to you. This is fine. We are happy to keep mailing to you if this is your distinct preference.

However, it may be that over time you have become internet savvy and would be happy to settle for material via email. If that is so, please let us know.

Reducing snail mail has many benefits, not the least is cost of production and mail costs which are constantly increasing.

In addition to costs is reliability. I hate to say this, but in my experience, generally, internet is much more reliable than Australia Post. I often receive mail for individuals other than those whose mail is addressed to my home. Presumably this means that out there in the world someone is receiving mail intended for me. I wished they'd pay my bills but that never seems to happen and sometimes my first whiff of an account is a red one threatening me with all sorts of dreadful consequences, so now many of my bills are set to arrive by email or internet reminder via the bank website.

Another advantage of being on the email mailing list is that we send around some very useful material that comes up from time to time. If we don't have your email address you are missing out on invaluable resources. I know that sometimes we all receive far too much material to go through, but each computer has a 'delete' button. Sometimes it's necessary to be brutal and to use this button so we can get on with our 'real lives' instead of existing in a virtual reality. However at other times, the material hits the spot, or provides a useful resource for future benefit.

So the 'bottom line' is – please ensure we have your email address and if you are not receiving this by email, please send a message to:

isfaf@alfred.org providing your full name, phone contacts and postal address, and let us know how you wish the newsletter to be sent to you.

By contrast, if you do not wish to receive mail from us, please let us know.

There are many reasons to pull out your diary now and to mark the following:

SEPTEMBER MEETING TUES SEPT 8

**JACKIE CROWE,
NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH
COMMISSIONER,
BETTY DAY CENTRE, 7.30PM**

We are very lucky to have Jackie fit us in to her busy and important schedule. The NMHC was set up in 2012 to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what's working and what's not. By having Jackie at our meeting, we will each have the opportunity to have an influential say in our future.

Jackie was Carer Consultant in the Ballarat region and brought about a number of improvements to services there which made a very real difference to families. She is now with Tandem, the peak body for mental health carers in Victoria and so is in an excellent position to continue to advocate for change both in that role and on the NMHC.

Please also mark your diaries for our October meeting, where you will have the opportunity to ask lots of questions and to discuss many of the issues raised by Professor John Read at our last meeting.

OCTOBER MEETING TUES OCT 13

**PHILIP BENJAMIN,
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL
APPROACHES
BETTY DAY CENTRE, 7.30PM**

Hot on the tail of our October meeting, comes Carers' Week and our Film afternoon get-together.

Because of unavailability of local Palace cinemas during Carers' Week, we are holding it at:

**THE CLASSIC CINEMA ELSTERNWICK ON
SUNDAY,**

(NOT SATURDAY AS PREVIOUSLY)

FILM AFTERNOON : THE INTERN

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18,

**1.15 pm for refreshments to be followed by the
film at around 2pm**

9 GORDON ST, ELSTERNWICK

**Book tickets by calling Marlene on 9690 7789
between September 29 and October 14**

The Classic is right next to Elsternwick station, with good tram and bus access as well. Parking can be sparse, but I often find parking on the other side of the railway line. Obey the signs in the side streets as the area is a great cash cow for funds Glen Eira Council obtains via parking fines at all times – even Sundays.

The film is 'The Intern,' with Robert de Nero and Anne Hathaway. It is being publicised with the theme: 'Experience never gets old', deals with a retired man and his interaction in the fashion field with a young 24 year old intern.... Themes we can all relate to in some ways.

We've not yet heard from Carers Vic who generally subsidise this event but we expect that they will give us their usual small grant. However, in all likelihood we will be able to ensure that tickets will be \$5 for pensioners and otherwise \$10 each. Committee members always bring a plate to share with everyone else over a cup of tea or coffee or glass of juice beforehand.

And for another opportunity to meet there is nothing better than the Dining Group. This dinner is especially important, as it is only a few days before Dr Stafrace, Director of Alfred Psychiatry is to speak to us. So the dinner will provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the issues we wish to raise with him, as well as to enjoy each-others' company and to watch our loved ones have a good time.

DINING GROUP

**6.30PM ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 5
LA PORCHETTA, 93 TOORAK ROAD,
SOUTH YARRA**

The restaurant is very easily accessed by train to the South Yarra station or by tram along either Toorak Road or Chapel Streets.

I think this will be about our third or fourth dining night out. The swelling numbers indicate that each one has been more successful than the last. For our loved ones to mix and to feel a valuable member of our combined social world is heart-warming.

We are always looking for someone, preferably not a member of the committee, to organise one of these

evenings. It's very easy...all one has to do is find an inexpensive venue, talk to the owners about their willingness to host a group of up to 20 people, set a date and then be willing to accept the RSVPs. Finally, let the restaurant know the final numbers a day or two in advance. Talk to a committee member at the next meeting because it would be good to arrange another dinner early in 2016.

NOVEMBER MEETING TUES NOV.10

ASSOC. PROFESSOR SIMON STAFRACE,

DIRECTOR, ALFRED PSYCHIATRY

BETTY DAY CENTRE, 7.30PM

I remind you of some of the important services Penny has written about, but as I cannot repeat them all, this is just a short reminder and you will need to access previous newsletters to learn more about each one.

1. Single Session family Therapy

We learned about this valuable resource from Natalie Papps at a recent meeting. Contact case managers for referral as sessions are filling fast.

2. Peer Support

There is no one size fits all, but each of the following organisations have websites with a wealth of useful information, courses and means of gaining the support that each of us needs on this difficult, challenging journey called Life.

- **Sane** - Helpline – 1800 187 264 and internet Forum via their website: www.sane.org
- **Voices Vic** - their website is nested in the Prahran Mission website www.prahranmission.org.au
- **VMIAC – Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council** is the peak state body for mental illness issues. www.vmiac.org.au

3. Legal advice and help Legal Issues

- Justice Connect, including Seniors Law - Freecall 1800 606 313, <https://www.justiceconnect.org.au/>
- Seniors' Rights - <http://seniorsrights.org.au/our-services/legal-services/>
- Homeless Law www.justiceconnect.org.au/homelesslaw
- Social Security Rights Victoria <http://www.ssrv.org.au/>
- WIRE Women's Support Line 1300 134 130 www.wire.org.au or email inforequests@wire.org.au

- Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre Inc. www.pmnc.org.au - Contact Robyn on 0417 127 376 or robyn@pmnc.org.au

- Inner South Community Health Contact ~~them on~~ 9525 1300

- Community Building Program Metro Access workers are based in Metropolitan Councils across Melbourne. Key strategies include:

- Ensuring that the needs of people with a disability are the focus of community planning.
- Supporting service providers to assist people with a disability to live the sort of life they choose.
- Improving community understanding about the needs and aspirations of people with a disability..

I may not be able to print fliers, so please keep this Newsletter handy as it contains many dates to remember.

Looking forward to your suggestions and to seeing you all soon both at Tuesday night meetings and social events included,

Warm regards and best wishes

Judi Burstyner

Convenor

August 2015