



Telephone (03) 9076 4713  
E-mail: [isfaf@alfred.org.au](mailto:isfaf@alfred.org.au)  
Website: <http://www.ispaf.org>  
Office and mail address:  
C/- Waiora Clinic  
Level 2, 435 Malvern Road, South Yarra 3141

## November 2014

This will be a short newsletter as there seems to have been a great deal else going on! On 21 October the ISFAF committee, plus one or two members with particular issues to raise, met with a selection of eight candidates from the local area to discuss our concerns regarding mental health and government policy generally. I take responsibility for the general remarks I made at the start of the meeting a copy of which is attached. As always the personal stories were confidential but some candidates were clearly moved by the hardship experienced by many of those navigating the mental health 'system'. We hope that, as a result of the evening, whoever are elected will have a better understanding of the issues we face and that we will have laid the ground for further discourse.

### Housing

The Housing Group led by Judi and Graham has been very hard at work scoping what's available in this region and developing a comprehensive submission. It has been tempting to try to obtain firm commitments from political parties in the lead up to the election, however, so many policy announcements are short term, and geared to attracting votes in particular electorates, that a different approach seemed necessary. More appropriate, we hope, will be to have waited until the election results are in and then to work with those who are elected to achieve a better supply of long term affordable housing for people with mental health issues in our region.

### Informal Dining Group

Thanks to Marlene, more than a dozen members met for a light meal at Basilico in Albert Park at the end of October and we have developed a list of people interested in getting together a number of times each year. The venue will alternate around the Alfred catchment and you are welcome to suggest an inexpensive eating place near you and to bring along any family member who'd like to come. Please let us know (on 9076 4713) if you want to be included on the listing - so far communication has been via email. We will

continue to hold our traditional End of Year Dinner on the second Tuesday in December in place of our support group meeting that month (see attached notice) and hope that it will continue to be one of our major annual events.

### Feedback Please

We need feedback as to what topics members would like addressed at our monthly support meetings in 2015.

Suggestions of topics to date include:

**Jackie Crowe** - carer representative on the National MH Commission

**The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

**Neami** - which handles the intake for community services in this region.

**Prahran Mission** - one of the only two mental health service providers.

**Inner South Community Health Service** - the other provider of MH community services.

### Employment

#### A Psychologist

Please let us know which of these topics are of interest and others you would find helpful in order of priority.

### 2014 a Year of Change!!!

This year has seen enormous change in the mental health sector. A new Mental Health Act has attempted to give clients a greater say in their treatment and places considerable extra administrative requirements on clinicians. 'Recovery' is sought by all - but remains elusive. In theory the community service sector should be easier to navigate but a question seems to arise as to whether it still exists for those with a serious mental illness! The 'law of diminishing returns' seems not to apply in other areas of health but one suspects that neither 'early intervention' nor 'recovery models' are simple to access....and this is not a reflection on public mental health services in our region - some of the best in Australia!

**Penny Lewisohn, ISFAF Convenor**