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Welcome to our last Newsletter for 2016. And what a year it has been! – with many ups and downs, lots of confusion – especially about the NDIS and the transition to it.

But enough complaining already!!

I've included a list of our meetings and look with pride at what our committee has worked to achieve – and with great joy when I think back at the supportive community that we are, sharing good times and bad times. That's what friends are for and that's what our ISFAF Family does. The foresight of those wonderful ladies who thought of establishing ISFAF in the 1990's was amazing, as is the work which committees have achieved along the way to keep our cohesive, friendship strong.

I hope you can join us at **Almazett on Tuesday 13 December** to end our shared year with a drink and lovely Lebanese feast, subsidized by the Alfred carer Service for which we are very grateful. We thank Lindy Alcorn for arranging the subsidy and Alfred Carer Services for providing a very generous contribution. Flier attached.

2016 IS THE YEAR THAT ALFRED PSYCH HAS STARRED

Of seven inaugural Awards made by Tandem for Exceptional Service to Families & Carers in Mental Health, awarded by Dr Margaret Grigg, Director of Victoria's Mental Health System, three very well-deserved awards went to Team Alfred.

<http://tandemcarers.org.au/tandem-awards-2016.php>

The seven awards were awarded to:

- Serena Griffin, Barwon Health
- Simon Kroes, NEXUS Dual Diagnosis Service
- **Amanda Latrobe, Senior Administrative Officer, Waiora Community**
- **Violeta Peterson, Carer Consultant Alfred Psychiatry**
- **Judith Rafferty, Volunteer Administration, Inner South Family and Friends**
- BBQ Boys Carers Group

JUDITH RAFFERTY is our silent high achiever.

Without Judith we would not be able to function. She runs the office with the most amazing proficiency, efficiency and dedication.

Without Judith we would not have a website.... And if we did it would be out of date.

Without Judith and Edwina you would not be reading this Newsletter or any other mail-out.

Judith's dedication and efficiency are amazing. She puts in far more office hours for ISFAF than I do, yet she remains behind the scenes, so few realize the extent of her work. She is the best proof reader I know. If you receive material from ISFAF and it contains errors you can rest assured that I was running late and did not have time to ask Judith to proof-read it. (As with this newsletter!!)

Judith's roles are too many to list, but there is no doubt that we could not function without her.

Many, many, many thanks, Judith.

VIOLETA PETERSON needs no introduction. I doubt whether there is anyone reading this who hasn't been assisted by Violeta. One of her many problems is that she does not own a means of reading the time, so she finds herself working in the middle of the night. She has no concept of days either, so she works on many that are well beyond her job description. Violeta's dedication to bettering our experience is remarkable. Despite lacking time management skills to enable her to limit her working time to her job description, Violeta has amazing insight into knowing how to deal with the many issues that confront us. She's a true professional with many years of experience and a wealth of knowledge. Despite her long hours with us, she manages to be a wonderful mother and wife and plays an important role in caring for her parents. Her warmth and understanding is extraordinary. I have learned an enormous amount from her and her assistance to me is invaluable.

Violeta's thank you below is addressed to all of us:

Thank you for the special nomination you made on my behalf. I am deeply grateful for the kind words you shared and appreciate all the support you have given me over the years. The immense dedication of the ISFAF members is a true inspiration and a strength that I attribute towards the passion I have for working with families. I am one of the very few Carer Consultants who works with an amazing support group, but most of all I am one of the lucky few who gets the opportunity to spend time with a group I consider to be my

cherished friends.

Thanks again for all your support and also a big congratulations to Judith for the recognised nomination she received and so much deserved.

*Warm regards,
Violeta*

AMANDA LATROBE is another quiet high achiever who has an amazing understanding of the many difficulties faced by families. She was nominated for the award by the many families whose lives she improved, each of whom testified that Amanda had provided extraordinary service and dedication to their problems.

I don't know Amanda personally, but the family members I spoke to who have been helped by her tell of a remarkable, passionate, intelligent, hard-working young lady who always 'goes the extra mile' for those around her.

We congratulate all seven of these marvellous winners, but have an extra special thank you and an extra special place in our hearts for **Judith, Violeta and Amanda**.

OUR WEBSITE

<http://ispaf.org/>

Please refer to it. It's kept pretty much up-to-date and has much useful material.

5 November 2016 was a very sad day for the mental health community because we lost one of our staunchest, most dedicated individuals. We have all benefitted from her dedication as the article reprinted here from The Age indicates.

Campaigner sought a better life for the mentally ill

BARBARA HOCKING

Mental health advocate

27-11-1947 – 5-11-2016

Barbara Hocking was one of Australia's leading advocates for people affected by mental illness. Her leadership and achievements leave a lasting legacy in how people living with mental illness and their families are treated and regarded.

As the first full-time executive director of SANE Australia ([1995-2012](#)), she led campaigning and advocacy to argue that those affected by mental illness are not just clinical "cases for treatment", but human beings with the same rights as all of us to inclusion in society – through access to housing, employment, social support and freedom from stigma and discrimination.

Barbara fought consistently for "a better life" for people affected by mental illness – a task which became the mission of SANE Australia, and has been adopted by the National Mental Health Commission.

Barbara's campaigning and advocacy was widely respected in the mental health sector. In the words of one admirer, she was "a calm and fierce warrior". During her leadership, SANE developed a range of initiatives which have had a significant influence on mainstream mental health policy and practice.

The pioneering SANE Helpline, online services and information resources empowered a generation of Australians affected by mental illness to understand their condition and help themselves as well as access support. SANE's research spurred action in a whole range of areas – the poor physical health of people severely affected by mental illness; their tragically high suicide rates; the lack of services when they are aged; employment; and support for families.

The StigmaWatch program to tackle media prejudice against the mentally ill won international recognition, and led to comprehensive education of journalists and scriptwriters on this topic.

Barbara was a member of the Australian Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee, sat on the National Media and Mental Health Working Group and was presented with a Special Award for Exceptional Contribution to Mental Health Services at the Mental Health Services Conference of Australia and New Zealand in 2012.

In 2008, she was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for her contribution to advocacy and public awareness of mental health. As well as being a Director of SANE Australia, she also served on the Board of Mental Health Australia and RUOK.

Barbara Hocking was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She studied zoology and education at Queen's University before joining Volunteer Service Overseas to teach for some years in Papua New Guinea.

Following her marriage in 1974 to Dr Bruce Hocking, she moved to Melbourne where she worked in the Victorian Health Department before joining Dr Margaret Leggatt at the recently-founded SANE Australia (then known as Schizophrenia Australia Foundation) in 1989. In 1995, she was appointed executive director, a post she held until retirement in 2012.

She subsequently volunteered in the Office of the Public Advocate's Community Visitors program to visit mental health facilities, to ensure residents are treated with dignity and respect.

Barbara is survived by her husband Bruce, children Patrick and Clare and grandchildren Tobias, Poppy, Jasmine and Rory.

Dr Paul Morgan was deputy director of SANE Australia, 1995-2015 .

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Articles are from The Conversation

What is taurine and how can it improve psychosis?

Kelly Allott, University of Melbourne;
Pat McGorry, University of Melbourne

People given taurine had significantly improved overall mental health symptoms, including those of psychosis, compared to those given placebo.

https://theconversation.com/what-is-aurine-and-how-can-it-improve-psychosis-68747?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20November%2021%202016%20-206128&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20November%2021%202016%20-206128+CID_f9abfb31ca5a8bb0c839a05140838038&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=What%20is%20aurine%20and%20how%20can%20it%20improve%20psychosis

Drug rehab and group therapy: do they work?

Julaine Allan, Charles Sturt University

Thousands of Australians go to residential drug and alcohol rehab programs every year. But is there evidence rehabs, as well as the group therapy they often rely on, actually work?

https://theconversation.com/drug-rehab-and-group-therapy-do-they-work-65413?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-206120&utm_content=The%20Weekend%20Conversation%20-206120+CID_2da4b074cf57c24b4242754a0799f9e9&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Drug%20rehab%20and%20group%20therapy%20do%20they%20work

Carers needed for comment by 16 December on new Carer Support Service

The Commonwealth Government Dept of Social Services has released the latest draft of its service delivery model for carer support services – “Delivering an Integrated Carer Support Service: A draft model for the delivery of carer support services.”

Carers and service providers are invited to provide comment about the model which is open until 16 December '16. <https://engage.dss.gov.au/a-new-integrated-carer-support-service-system/>

Alfred Health Carer Services has posted an update about this consultation opportunity under News and Events on their website:

<http://www.carersouth.org.au/news-and-events/have-your-say-on-the-design-of-carer-services/>

Holiday time should be fun time

Look on Council and Local Library's have fun activities
.....look on their websites.

Arts Access is an organization which often provides very good opportunities to individuals with a disability and their carers to attend performances at vastly reduced rates.

See website for further details.

<http://www.artsaccess.com.au>

CAN YOU HELP?

From Kirsten Gainsford who spoke to us in August:

Volunteers with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder needed for Research Study:

The Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre is seeking volunteers between 18 and 60 years of age with a diagnosis of schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder to help us investigate whether gentle brain stimulation can improve attention, memory and problem solving.

Participation will involve visiting our research centre in Prahran for five research sessions, each one taking between approximately two and three hours. You will be compensated for your time and travel costs.

Together we will complete an interview, do some computerised activities, take a recording of your brain waves and give you a short session of gentle non-invasive brain stimulation. Stimulation is safe and not painful. It is given while you are awake and alert and activates only a small area of cells on the surface of your brain. It will not have any lasting impact on your brain activity.

If you think you or a family member could benefit from this research and would like to know more, please contact Kirsten Gainsford on 9076 6592 or kirsten.gainsford@monash.edu

Don't forget to look on our webpage for up-to-date information.

<http://ispaf.org/information-services/useful-contacts>

I've included some sheets of information that you may like to keep as reference material.

We look forward seeing you on Tuesday 14 February at our first 2017 meeting.. By co-incidence this falls on to St Valentine's Day so we'll have a special St Valentine inspired meeting planned for you. Check our web-site for further details!

Wishing you a safe, joyful and healthy holiday period, with Compliments of the Season to all.

Warm Regards from
Judi Burstyner and the ISFAF Committee.