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June 2023

Hi All,

I feel very privileged to share wonderful news with you.

Our long-time member, Pauline D'Astoli has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM). Pauline's citation includes a very long list of her many invaluable long-term contributions to the mental health community, Peninsula Health, her wide-ranging contributions to the general community including utilizing her professional role in education in a broad range of contexts, research and extending to volunteering at The Shrine of Remembrance. Pauline, who, in addition to being a 24/7 carer, regularly drives from Balnarring to AMAH to represent carers in the AMAH Physical Health Portfolio. Pauline has forbidden me from 'making a fuss' – as she put it – so I cannot include her full citation as I had hoped to do. It is truly inspiring. Congratulations Pauline - no-one is more deserving of being recognized and honoured for tirelessly working towards making the world a better place.

The introduction of the Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Act on 1 September will affect us all. We are very fortunate that Stephen Taffe, Senior Legal Counsel has agreed to explain some of the changes between current and new legislation at our AGM on Tuesday 11 July. Planning for implementation of the changes is in progress. In early 2024, Mandy Kadish, who is leading the implementation at AMAH will update us on the changes 'on the ground'.

The final report of the VRCMH included 65 recommendations. The government has undertaken to implement all, with the result that some are functioning. Mental Health Hubs and Family-Led Carer Centres (FLCCs) are active across Victoria. How to access them is outlined in this newsletter. Speakers are planned to explain further details to us later this year, with Shamus Goble, who is managing the Family Led Carer Centre for Star Health / Better Health.

If you find the details of new services and how they interact challenging to understand, please 'join the club'. I have attempted to make it understandable, but am still unclear. It seems to me that if you need help with navigating the system, Carer Gateway, Carers Vic, Tandem and your local FLCC all have their place, and to some extent it is worth contacting all three to see what is available at any time.

It was delightful to see twenty-eight of us celebrating the Solstice in the lovely surrounds of the Brighton Beach Hotel Originally planned as a self-funded event, our amazing treasurer Eleni was able to fund it via the generosity of AMAH. Our AGM, is just around the corner, with Carers Week Film and Lunch, World Mental Health Day, a visit to the Justin Art House Museum and our end of year Dinner to follow soon. Keep your eyes on our website to learn details of these events. We thank AMAH for their generosity in making our events possible.

I hope you will be able to enjoy them with us,

Judi

ISFAF 32nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:
Tuesday 11 July, 7 PM at 549 St Kilda Rd Melb

SPEAKER:
Stephen Taffe, Snr Legal Counsel, AMAH

TOPIC:
**Understanding the changes of the New
Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022**

In line with the early starting time of the meeting,
A 'special' supper will be available from 6.30 pm.

A new Act was a recommendation of the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health. With the new MHWA coming into force on 1 September, we are extremely fortunate to have Senior Legal Counsel to help us understand the changes. Only knowledge can prepare us for the new laws.

The "Spotless Building" is a little to the city side of Wesley College,

It has white umbrellas in the forecourt and lots of free parking and trams in St Kilda Rd.

If you are having trouble with transport, seek further information or just need a chat, about ISFAF and/or issues faced by carers please phone:

Judi M: 0425 723 746 or Eleni M: 0412 018 722

Please come early to chat and to enjoy delicious refreshments from 6.30 pm

Due to security needs, we are required to pay a concierge at the door of the building.

If you come late you may not be able to enter.

MAY 24 – WORLD SCHIZOPHRENIA



This newsletter is dedicated to Quentin Fricke, son of Judy Carroll. The following was written by her son Hayden, Quentin's brother, a psychologist and Managing Director of Steople. Hayden was a guest speaker at our monthly meeting in September 2021.

Today is World Schizophrenia day. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness of the mental illness that affects over 20 million people worldwide. Whilst we seem to have a much better understanding of anxiety and depression these days, schizophrenia is still highly misunderstood and stigmatized, particularly through inaccurate representations in the media. The aim of this day is to help reduce this misunderstanding and make it easier for people with schizophrenia to seek help. Sadly my beautiful brother Quentin lived a traumatised life with this terrible illness for over 35 years and then passed away late last year. He was only 53. He passed away due to physical health issues because for many years he was not able to take care of himself properly due to his mental health issues. For almost his entire life with this dreadful illness, he heard voices, had highly paranoid and delusional thoughts that he believed were true and he struggled to get any peace at all. This meant that he was not able to work, lead a purposeful life, or maintain any meaningful romantic relationships. His mind was highly fractured. However, he was not the illness. He was a human being with an illness. He was NOT a schizophrenic but rather he was a person with schizophrenia. He was a gentle soul with an incredibly kind heart, right to the end. I share this story because I hope this helps some people to understand the illness better.

SOME OUTCOMES OF THE VRCMH

Housing

Despite the political wrangling in Canberra over the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund, the federal government has undertaken to distribute \$2 billion for social housing by the end of July 2023. [Federal government to spend \\$2 billion on social housing around Australia - ABC News](#). Whilst this is great news, some forms of 'social housing' may not suit individuals with mental health challenges. However in response to the recommendation by the VRCMH to deliver codesigned homes for Victorians the Victorian Government has agreed to provide

➤ More homes & support for Victorians with mental illness

An \$85 million grant from the Social Housing Growth Fund will be used to build homes across Victoria designed specifically for Victorians living with mental illness. According to the recommendations of the VRCMH, the model will include accompanying wrap-around health

support and ongoing care, mental health and wellbeing supports. <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/more-homes-and-support-people-mental-illness>

➤ Southeast Family and Carer-led Centre (FLCC)

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/news/providers-of-new-family-and-carer-led-centres-announced>

<https://www.starhealth.org.au/south-east-metro-carer-and-family-led-centre/>

In recognition of the VRCMH which identified the need for carers to have their own services and space, Family and Carer-led Centres are being set up across Victoria to specifically support carers of individuals experiencing mental health and/ or substance use challenges.

Better Health Network and Star Health have amalgamated to operate a FLCC across the south east metropolitan area and extending to Gippsland. The staff of the centre aim 'to deeply engage to understand the needs of carers, family and kin of people living with mental illness across the region, with lived experience at the centre of service design'.

Initially the Centre is offering telephone and virtual based peer supports, including connections and service navigation. Steps to expand the start-up service is underway, including a range of services and face to face access. FLCCs are in progress throughout Victoria. Although this service is labelled South East, geographical boundaries / 'catchment areas' do not impact a carer from accessing any of the centres they choose. Referrals are not required – simply phone in, or once face to face services are set up – turn up.

PH; 03 9066 1500 ... M - F 9:30am – 4:30pm
carerscentre@starhelath.org.au

➤ Community based Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs (MHWBHs)

<https://bhn.org.au/counselling-mental-health/mentalhealthhub/>

MHWBHs, provide short to medium range confidential support for a wide range of symptoms, some of which we all experience at times, but which may sometimes need some additional help. Support is provided irrespective of age, visa status or referral – self or otherwise. All Hubs are open Monday to Friday 9 am to 5 pm (closed on public holidays), but some have extended AH /weekend accessibility

Hubs are available across Vic, offer a range of one to one or other support, some with walk-ins available.

To find your nearest Hub: [Partners In Wellbeing](#)
Ph: **1300 375 330** (9 am to 10 pm weekdays and 9 am to 5 pm weekends) to be directed to the most appropriate service for your needs at the time you call.
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs#find-your-nearest-hub>

➤ **State Acknowledgment of Harm Project**

<https://www.livedexperiencejustice.au/>

Subsequent to the release of the Report of the VRCMH in February 2021, in May 2022, as a means of clearing a path to the future, the Vic. Dept. of Health commissioned a report confronting past trauma caused by mental health services. This report, released in June 2023 as 'Not before time: Lived experience led justice and repair', was prepared by a Reference Group of 10 including consumers, survivors, family members, carers and supporters led by Simon Katterl with support from Vic. Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAAC) and Tandem.

Katterl accused staff at the Department of Health of threatening him and his future employment, if he did not change the report. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-21/calls-to-investigate-alleged-threats-simon-katterl-mental-health/102502524>

However he did not waiver, providing an incisive report, including acknowledging the trauma suffered by 'invisible carers', 'refusal to respond to the concerns and needs of families, despite desperate calls, overwhelming evidence and repeated recommendations', 'exploitative use of carers' forcing carers' lives to be changed by 'caring relationships that they had not originally expected'.

➤ **Health-led Responses to 000 calls re Mental Health**

https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/plan-for-paramedics-to-answer-mental-health-triple-0-calls-delayed-20230530-p5dcd8.html?utm_content=deal_on_racism_claims_at_hawthorn&list_name=3C1D28D0-7E1E-4DC0-9DD3-A961CC5360DB&promote_channel=edmail&utm_campaign=am-theage&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=2023-05-31&mbnr=MTI2NzQxMTc&instance=2023-05-31-06-56-AEST&jobid=29671364

According to the VRCMH, by 1 September 2023, clinicians with mental health training were to be introduced to respond to 000 calls related mental health issues. As reported in The Age (30/05/2023) this vital service has been 'deferred for an unspecified time'. Hence, we can expect that police – often with limited understanding of mental health – will continue to attend.

➤ **Six Emergency AOD Mental Health Hubs**

<https://www.miragenews.com/dedicated-emergency-mental-health-hub-opens-at-1024370/>

A new \$5.3 million hub within Monash Medical Centre's emergency department is part of the Vic. Government's \$32 million investment in six Vic. Hubs enabling patients aged over 16 years with co-occurring mental health and Alcohol and other Drug (AOD)

issues (ie 'dual diagnosis') to be assessed and treated by an emergency department mental health team of psychiatrists, mental health nurses and social workers to provide specialist and integrated assessment, treatment and post-discharge support.

Hubs are already operating at Barwon Health's University Hospital Geelong, Western Health's Sunshine Hospital, St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, with the Royal Melbourne Hospital hub opening mid-2023 and a Peninsula Health Frankston Hospital hub to open in 2025.

Delivered as part of the Monash Medical Centre emergency department expansion which added 28 beds along with six short-stay beds for patients, dedicated children's emergency area and improved ambulance access.

Star Health / Better Health Network <https://bhn.org.au/>

In addition to services resulting from the VRCMH, Star Health / Better Health Network offer a wide range of services to improve mental and general health and wellbeing including:

- Adult and Disability Programmes,
- Alcohol and Other Drugs – for those suffering addiction and carers,
- Antenatal,
- General Health, including, cardiac, diabetes, diet, gp, travel, men's, women's clinics.
- Carer Respite,
- Outreach, case management,
- Exercise – incl. chair, xxx
- Nursing – cardiac, chronic disease,
- Counselling – with a wide range of specialized professionals incl. gambling, family, violence, men's behaviour change, women and children,
- Dementia,
- Dental,
- Home Care Packages – detox programmes, mobile outreach,
- My Aged Care

..and the list goes on... <https://bhn.org.au/services-2/>

For access: Ph: 9684 4281 or 132 246 (132 BHN) or
E: triageclinician@starhealth.org.au

Mental Health Integrated Complex Care

<https://www.mindaustralia.org.au/services/victoria/mental-health-integrated-complex-care-mhicc>

Star Health, in conjunction with Mind Australia, can provide 6-12 months of support for adults with severe mental illness who don't have NDIS but do have a Health Care Card. For individually tailored support including psychiatry / psychology, specialized nursing, family liaison, clinical and non-clinical care co-ordination:
Ph: BH 1800 862 363, E: mindconnect@mindaustralia.org.au

EARLY PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORTS PROGRAMME

[Early Psychosocial Supports Program Extended | Premier of Victoria](#)

The Early Intervention Psychological Support Response (EIPSR) provides Victorians aged 16-64 years who haven't yet accessed or aren't eligible for the NDIS with short-to-medium term psychosocial support.

Ten NGOs are funded for two years to provide easy access to individually tailored one-on-one and group-based mental health and life skills support: Mind Australia, Wellways Australia, EACH, Cohealth, Mallee Family Care, ERMHA, Star Health, Sacred Heart Mission, Mentis Assist and Uniting Vic Tas.

Health-led Responses to 'Public Drunkenness'?

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/victoria-unprepared-to-decriminalise-public-drunkenness-warn-police-and-doctors-20230303-p5cp56.html>

In 2021, in line with the Victorian Government's view, as expressed by Minister Martin Foley that: 'An intoxicated person should be looked after, not locked up,' four trials were set up with the provision of safe beds and a nurse, social worker and peer worker on-call to assist police or paramedics. The model was to be trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, non-judgemental and recovery focussed. Consent from the intoxicated person is said to be required, which seems to call into question many definitions of intoxication.

In November, 'Public Drunkenness' will no longer be a crime, but the workforce and facilities envisaged to 'look after' intoxicated individuals are unlikely to be in place, leaving a void in community services. There seems no doubt that a well-intended, well planned, suitably serviced means of encouraging individuals with AOD problems to seek help is a wonderful step forward. However, I am concerned about the interim period until this vision becomes reality. How are carers to be protected, if, after November, police will be compromised in their ability to prevent violence, but instead to be put into the position of seeking 'consent' from individuals whose very condition defines them unable to provide consent – and for whom the introduction of safe facilities with trained staff, which were to accompany the new law have not been provided

INQUIRY INTO THE RECOGNITION OF UNPAID CARERS

<https://www.aph.gov.au/UnpaidCarers>

With a view to reform, The Federal Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs seeks submissions from unpaid carers on the provisions and operation of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010* (the Act) focussing on:

- the effectiveness of the Act and the associated Statement of Australia's Carers in raising recognition and awareness of the unpaid caring role, including its obligations on public service agencies

- developments in the policy landscape at a Commonwealth level since the Act's passage in 2010
- the effectiveness of existing state, territory and international recognition of unpaid care (statutory or other practice)
- how to better identify the role of unpaid carers in Australian society and the role of a reformed Act, with regard to:
 - understanding the value of unpaid care,
 - the needs of specific cohorts such as young carers, First Nations carers, LGBTIQ+ carers, or culturally and linguistically diverse carers,
 - the meaningful role that flexible workplaces play in unpaid care, and
 - the Government's broad agenda in relation to the care and support economy, the importance of employment participation, and a strong focus on gender equity, and
- any other related matters, noting that the adequacy of payments for carers is out of scope for this inquiry.

Please endeavour to prepare individual submissions, if possible sharing them with ISFAF so that your views are included in our group's submission, which will be prepared immediately after the AGM, in time for submission by the deadline of Fri. 11 Aug 2023.

The Carers Recognition Act is available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2010A00123>

For further information on the Inquiry:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/UnpaidCarers

CARERS VICTORIA

Free of charge, Carers Vic advocates for carers and provides a wide range of useful services, some of which are shown below. Although Carers Vic is not specific to mental health, it is essential that we all join to provide it with the force in numbers that strengthens their advocacy that benefits us all. A recent example of their success is their recent success in advocating with the state government which had announced that holders of Carer Cards would no longer receive concessions on travel via public transport. Advocacy by Carers Vic has successfully won the day to reinstate these concessions.



➤ Carers Victoria's Carer Advisory Service

is a free, confidential service staffed by experienced professionals to provide members, carers, families, and supporters with expert advice, information, and help in

navigating and accessing a range of carer-specific services across Victoria.

Experienced qualified Carer Support Advisors provide expert advice on a wide range of topics, referrals to respite and support services across Victoria and navigating systems and programs including the Carer Gateway, My Aged Care, NDIS, Disability Gateway, and mental health services. Email: access@carersvictoria.org.au
Ph: BH: 1800 514 845 To arrange a call via an interpreter, phone Telephone Interpreter Service: 131 450
<https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/news-and-stories/the-voice-blog/the-voice-blog-may-2023#CarerAdvisoryServiceMay2023>

➤ **Support for Carers Program**

The Support for Carers Program provides a range of services and supports for all Victorian carers, incl. respites. <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/benefits/support-for-carers-program>

There is no need to register with the Commonwealth Carer Gateway to access the state funded Support for Carers programme. To find your local provider of this programme: Ph: 1800 514 845

https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/media/4841/support-for-carers-program-providers_aug22.pdf

PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG ADVISORY SERVICE (PDAS) CHOICE AND MEDICATION

Don't forget that if you have questions about medication, you can refer them to the Victorian PDAS: PDAS@alfred.org.au
Viandro Borja, Lead Pharmacist, AMAH
Ph: 0417 536 655 or 9076 8036,

<https://www.alfredhealth.org.au/services/pharmacy-at-alfred-health/about-alfred-health-pharmacy/choice-and-medication-portal>

➤ **AUDIT REPORT ON COMMUNITY HEALTH AND HOSPITALS PROGRAM RELEASED**

The Australian National Audit Office has released a new report from the audit of the Community Health and Hospitals Program that describes the administration of the nationwide funding program as 'ineffective' and 'short of ethical requirements'. Further conclusions are available at: https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/administration-of-the-community-health-and-hospitals-program?_cldee=A0XKiVxdhpQ3QDr1RcOp_ArG6dXIFuqoa3g-F1xTm0taxqg79CQdDArdTmLKLA7f&recipientid=contact-7873f0a4aec7ec11a7b5002248158938-b15eba0616474061b185671829bc3792&esid=0cb13a5f-0004-ee11-8f6e-00224818ac77

DATES TO DIARIZE

Please check ISFAF website for updates
<https://ispaf.org/>

ONGOING ISFAF EVENTS

1st & 3rd Thursday of the month: Walk n Chat

Meet: Outside North Point Café
(Beach end of North Rd Brighton)
Must Book - Ph 0425 723 746 in the morning to check
Generally, walkers meet at 1pm,
non-walkers at 2.15pm in café
(refreshment funded by AHCS)

Tuesday 11 July:

6.30 pm: Light Supper
7.00 pm Annual General Meeting
7.30 pm Monthly Meeting... details are on page one.

2nd Tuesday of the month:

Monthly Support Meetings549 St Kilda Rd

7.10pm ...Light Supper 7.30pm... Speaker
(see page 1 for details)

Tuesday 8 August: 7.30 pm:

**Shamus Goble, Mngr, SE. Family-led Carer Centre,
Star Health**

'All About The Sth-East Family-Led Carer Centre'

Other planned speakers for 2023 will provide information about Family Violence and how to Prevent it, Family Therapy at AMAH and topics of interest.

**Be kind to yourself so that
you have enough happiness
to share with the world.**

Hopefully the information in this newsletter is current, but our landscape is changing. Carer Gateway, Carers Vic, Tandem and our new FLCCs are good sources of up to date information, but dare I say, better than all is our wonderful Judith Rafferty who updates the ISFAF website. <https://ispaf.org/>

For respite and other events, refer to Mind (Ph: 1300 554 660 (<https://www.mindaustralia.org.au/>)). The attached flier is useful if you are in Bayside. If not, check their website.

I have steered very clear of the discussing the NDIS as those changes there are in discussion. ... It's a 'watch this space', so keep your eye on the NDIS website and ignore the media hype.

Our monthly meetings are planned to help us keep up to date...keep the 2nd Tuesday night of the month free.

Warm Regards, Judi

Mom: Son when the bus driver asks you how old you are, tell him that you're 6, not seven. We'll save ten cents.
Driver: How old are you, son?
Child: I'm six, sir.
Driver: And when will you be seven?
Child: When I get off this bus.