Mailing address: Inner South Family and Friends,
PO Box 315, Prahran 3181, Vic Aust

Office address: Level 6, 607 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004

Phone: 9076 4784 (Leave a message if unattended)

Website: http://www.ispaf.org

Chair: Judi Burstyner mobile 0425 723 746
Email judi.burstyner@gmail.com

15 March 2025

ISFAF APRIL MONTHLY MEETING AND FORUM

7 PM FOR 7.30 PM - TUESDAY 8 APRIL

MEET LOCAL CANDIDATES IN AN IMPARTIAL, BALANCED SETTING

CAULFIELD PARK PAVILION

Caulfield Park, cnr Hawthorn and Balaclava Rds
Drive to Pavilion car park from Balaclava Rd,
Driveway to pavilion is opposite Holland Gv

Invitations were sent to candidates:
Independent,
Labor,
Liberal,
Greens.
We have received positive responses from all:

Josh Burns, Labor candidate for Macnamara,
Sonya Semmens – Greens candidate for Macnamara,
Tim Wilson – Liberal Candidate for Goldstein,
Zoe Daniels, Independent Candidate for Goldstein

We await response from Labor candidate
A light supper will be available from 7.05pm
There is no charge, but a donation would be appreciated.

Please:
Diarize and join us, AND bring lots of others so we have an impressive number in the audience to demonstrate the importance of carers and mental health,
keep an eye on our website for updates:

https://ispaf.org/

And have a look at the last page of this newsletter for more events - Dates to Diarize

In our fast-moving world, this is the 2024-2025 spring-summer-autumn edition of the ISFAF 'Quarterly' Newsletter. Apologies for having let spring and summer slip by without a hard copy 'quarterly' newsletter, but the months did just that –slip by.

Belated congratulations go to our wonderful Deb Warner for winning the Individual Award for 'Positive and Productive Culture' among the Recognizing Excellence at Alfred Health awards. Deb is founder of APOD Family Support, Senior Family Peer Worker at Headspace Early Psychosis Program, an amazing mother and grandmother – supporter to many. How she fits it all in amazes me. Those of us who know her have always known that she is truly amazing. It's well deserved that the authorities recognize her knowledge, skill, dedication, energy, incredible mind and enormous heart.

Although over the past 6 months, the hard copy newsletter has been dormant, emails have been flowing relentlessly. As the rest of the world, ISFAF is very keen to save paper, the time spent in preparing mail-outs and mailing costs. It seems most of you have email addresses. Those members who have restricted communication to our rare 'quarterly' hard copy newsletter, have missed out on a great deal of important information that was circulated by email as it arose.

To help ISFAF committee (who are themselves volunteer carers) save trees, valuable time and effort and to be able to keep up with the latest carer / mental health news as it emerges, please email judi.burstyner@gmail.com advising that you would like to go on our email circulation list rather than remain on our quarterly newsletter only list. Examples of important news that you missed out on by waiting for 'hard copy only' include the list of emergency contacts and the news of the proposed merger of Alfred Health with Peninsula Health.

Our next meeting on 8 April is extremely important and a wonderful opportunity to meet candidates. We need you to attend and bring with you as many individuals as possible. Politicians at election time are interested only in one thing – numbers. A show of strength of the carer and mental health community will instil in their minds that we need to be looked after. Limited attendance would indicate that we are too few to provide the votes they need – hence mental health and carers can be ignored.

GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES

Health Direct

'Free 24 hour Australian Health Advice you can count on.

Nurse on Call: 1800 022 222

https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/how-healthdirect-can-help-you

The excellent website includes a symptom checker to guide you to your needs.

https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker

Australia's most comprehensive directory of healthcare professionals and services.'

https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services

Medicare Urgent Health Care Clinics (UCCs)

'When you need stitches, not surgery'.

https://www.health.vic.gov.au/priority-primary-care-centres

Victorian government funding ensures that GP led free treatment is available 7 days during extended hours with or without presentation of a Medicare Card for urgent, but not life-threatening conditions, such as:

- minor infections
- minor fractures, sprains, sports injuries and neck and back pain
- urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- minor cuts
- insect bites and rashes
- minor eye and ear problems
- respiratory illness
- gastroenteritis
- mild burns.

UCCS are available across Victoria, with the Primary Health Network operating four in Melbourne's South East: at Dandenong, Frankston, Prahran and Narre Warren.

https://www.semphn.org.au/medicare-urgent-care-clinics#ppcc-resources

E HEALTH - REPORT ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES 2025 - PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2025/health

According to the following analysis by Mental Health Australia (MHA),

'*the above report highlights concerning nationwide trends of reduced access to mental health support, at a time when our community needs it most.*

The report shows that 20.4% of people in Australia delayed seeing a mental health professional over the previous 12 months due to cost. This is an increase from the 19.3% reported last year, and up significantly from the 12% reported in 2020-21. This new data really brings home the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Australians' access to mental health supports.

Similarly, there has been a continued slight decline in the proportion of people in Australia accessing Medicare-subsidised mental health services from a peak 11.6% in 2020-21 to 10.6% in 2023-24.

The report also shows a continued fall in the proportion of children and young people under 25 accessing Medicare-subsidised primary mental health services over the last year, down from 9.6% in 2022-23 to 8.9% in 2023-24. The change is starkest for young people aged 18-24, with rates of use down from 16.4% in 2022-23 to 14.8% in 2023-24.

These declining trends are despite a slight increase in overall ongoing government mental health spending in 2022-23 (the most recent data we have available), to $12.6 billion.

Governments across Australia spent $478.47 on mental health services per person in 2022-23 – an $11.60 increase per person in real terms from 2021-22. Governments invested a further $5.3 billion in support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme for people with "primary" psychosocial disability.

While increased funding to improve access to mental health services and supports across the community is welcome, spending on mental health still represents just 8.3% of overall health expenditure. This is still far below the 15% "burden of disease", where mental ill-health and substance conditions are estimated to be the highest cause of "non-fatal burden of disease" in Australia in 2023.

While these trends are concerning, as we've set out in Mental Health Australia's Vision Statement: A mentally healthy Australia, we know what we need to do, to set out a different path for Australia's mental health. We need to:

- *Overhaul the system foundations to build a world-class system of mental health care and support;*
- *Match funding to the scale of the problem and community expectations; and*
- *Embed an equitable, inclusive, human rights-based approach to care and support.'*

MHA's recent Pre-Budget Submission also sets out their recommended investments that the Government can make now, to deliver on these changes.' Mental Health Australia's 2025-2026 Pre-Budget submission | Mental Health Australia

REFORMING THE VICTORIAN MH SYSTEM

Your rights according to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022.

Tandem has created an excellent resource that should be read by all those dealing with the mental health system. The Kit is specifically designed for carers. It is extensive, available on-line at the following link: https://tandemcarers.org.au/p/p/Contents/Find-Support/Your-rights/Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Act.aspx?hkey=a02bbaba-a44c-4a3d-80a4-bc33a10aa5a0

However, if you are unable to access it on-line, please phone Tandem at: 1800 314 325 or 8803 5555 and ask to be sent a hard copy of the major aspects.

Many of us have been following the regular on-line information sessions from the Victorian Department of Health which are set to conclude this month. Some of the current summaries and updates include:

The first phase of Victorian reform:

According to the Vic. Dept of Health the 'First Phase of Reform' required according to the Victorian Royal Commission into Mental Health has been accomplished, via successful

- $6 billion investment,
- integration of lived experience voices across the system,
- protection of consumer and carer rights
- providing more people care when and where they need it,
- access to more early intervention programs in the community
- support and care from a much larger and more diverse workforce than ever before,
- establishment of an infrastructure pipeline,
- long term workforce reforms
- more mental health beds to meet critical demand,
- establishment of the legal foundations for the reformed system,
- delivery of new and improved services to meet the needs of Victorians.

The next phase of reform:

We are currently in 'the next phase of reform' discussed at: Our plan for the next phase of reform | health.vic.gov.au

Priorities for this phase are:

1. Focussing on prevention and promotion,
2. Growing strong, safe and supported workforces,
3. Supporting a system that embeds lived experience at every level,
4. Delivering new and better services,
5. Providing new support to the system,
6. Driving cultural change.

'Help is Here'

Campaign to Support Mental Health Locals

MH Locals are a Victorian government service providing confidential professional mental health assistance. The service:

- is free,
- is available to all residents aged 26 years and over,
- is not restricted by 'catchment' (ie individuals can attend any Local that they choose),
- does not need a referral
- is available across Victoria at a range of metropolitan and rural locations which can be found at:

https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-services/mental-health-and-wellbeing-locals

The rollout of the Locals will be accompanied by the phasing out of the MH Hubs (no doubt involving costs associated with and rebadging and redecorating).

MH Locals are available to all wishing for mental health help and are additional and distinct from:

MH Connect Centres (which are for carers)

which offer a space to relax and assistance specifically for Families, Carers and Supporters in MH.
The latest information on the MH and Wellbeing Connect Centres and their locations is at:
https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-connect

Department of Health's lived experience plan

The Vic Dept. of Health's belief that every person receiving mental health care has the right to actively participate in their recovery. To this end a beautifully illustrated and drawn up 'Lived Experience Plan' is available at: https://www.mhwc.vic.gov.au/le-plan, together with filmed discussion with Consumer Commissioner, Maggie Toko and Carer Commissioner, Jacqueline Gibson.

Community Redesign Expert Advisory Group set up - Members appointed

In February, The Department of Health appointed an Expert Advisory Group to inform the redesign of community-based mental health and wellbeing services in Victoria.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Redesign project aims to improve the way DHS delivers level 5 community-based services for people of all ages with moderate to severe mental illness who have more intensive treatment, care and support needs.

Team Members from Tandem have attended briefings on 'the Next Phase. Their perspectives are:

'What we know: it's a high-level roadmap

*The **Next Phase of Reform** is a **roadmap, not a funded implementation plan.** Detail about actions and timeframes depends on the next two State Budgets. We should have more clarity for 2025-26 after the May Budget.*

We do, however, know that funding for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect centres is guaranteed to at least 2028. 🙌

What Tandem knows: The DHS priorities

The 'roadmap' sets priorities for reform up to mid-2027, including:

- ***Reforming infant, child, and youth mental health** – phased transition to Infant, Child and Youth Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services with two streams for 0–11 years and 12–25 years, more YPARC centres and strengthening the Children's Health and Wellbeing Locals and the role of headspace.*
- ***Reforming mental health crisis response** – designing youth and adult 'safe spaces' for people experiencing a crisis, and "a shift towards" a health-led crisis response model.*
- ***Redesign** – including improving mental health and alcohol and other drug service integration, collaboration between clinical services, local services and NGOs, and redesigning community mental health services.*
- ***Implementing key strategies** – including the **Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy**, **Statewide Wellbeing Strategy**, and **Victorian Eating Disorders Strategy**.*
- ***Lived experience workforce support** – continuing lived experience workforce programs and launching a Lived and Living Experience Leadership Strategy.*

What we know: your priorities

At our August Members' Meeting, Tandem members identified three top advocacy priorities for this reform stage:

- *Supported housing (recommendation 25) – which includes priority access to social and affordable housing for people needing intensive mental health support*
- *A health-led response to mental health emergencies (recommendation 10) – have paramedics lead responses rather than police, where possible*
- *New bed-based rehabilitation services (recommendation 12) – new rehabilitation models for those with complex mental health needs*

What we don't know: details of what will be funded and implemented

Funding for 2025-26 reforms may not be confirmed until May. It's unclear if:

- *A health-led crisis response will be in place before mid-2027*
- *Supported housing or new bed-based rehabilitation services will be included in this reform phase*
- *The co-designed model for the statewide peer-led suicide support service for family, carers and supporters will be implemented (in place of the current interim model).*

NATIONAL ADVANCED CARE PLANNING WEEK

17-24 MARCH 2024

https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/advance-care-planning-week

A good time can always be found to have a conversation with your loved ones and health providers so they know what matters most to you and respect your treatment preferences, but this week it is especially perfect. For free advice or to get a free starter pack, call the National Advance Care Planning Support Service on 1300 208 582 from 9am - 5pm (AEST/AEDT) Monday to Friday or download the pack from: https://www.advancecareplanning.org.au/create-your-plan/create-your-plan-vic

ELDER ABUSE

If you need advice or would like to learn more about Elder Abuse or know of anyone who would benefit from guidance, please phone 0482 175 4004 or make contact via https://eaaa.org.au/?utm_source=Carers%20Australia&utm_campaign=dbaddcc3aa-CNN_30_08_24_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-b47dab8e48-295818372

CHANGES TO CARER PAYMENTS

From 20 March, Carer Payments permissible working hours have risen from 25 to 100 per 4 week period. You will still report your hours each fortnight, but you will not have to report study, training, volunteering or travel time.

https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/changes-to-carer-payment-and-number-hours-you-can-work

FITZROY LEGAL SERVICE'S LAW HANDBOOK NOW AVAILABLE FREE ONLINE

The latest edition of The Law Handbook is now available online to help community members navigate common legal issues in everyday life.
The handbook was first published by Fitzroy Legal Service in 1977. It now covers 90 topics, including tenancy, consumer protection, anti-discrimination, family violence and custody matters, environmental law, and employment law.
Access The Law Handbook 2024 for free online or purchase a hard copy or ebook edition.
https://fls.org.au/law-handbook/

PLEASE TURN OVER FOR 'THE BEST BITS'

Our last event- a gorgeous art exhibition by artist Alexandra Lewisohn and lunch at Fonda Flinders:

DATES TO DIARIZE

PRE-ELECTION FORUM: Tuesday 8 April 7.30pm (following 7.00pm light supper):
Caulfield Park Pavilion (See details on page1).

We have invited local candidates from ALP, Liberals, Greens and an Independent. Tim Wilson from the electorate of Goldstein and Sonya Semmens from Macnamara have accepted. We await responses from Josh Burns, of Macnamara and from Zoe Daniels of Goldstein.

ISFAF has a strong commitment to advocating for better assistance to individuals caught in the mental health sector, both our loved ones and we as carers. Reminding candidates that we are a large number who may influence their success or otherwise at the coming polls provides every one of us with a true means to make use of democratic process. The onus is on YOU. Democracy is the best form of government among many other not so good and very bad forms. Please make use of the process that many have given their lives to protect for us. Don't waste the opportunity. Diarize the event and circulate it among everyone you know. Ask them to join us – we need LOTS of people in the audience. It is not essential that they be carers. By coming along, they show that they care about the election and that they are among the millions of voters who are connected to someone challenged directly or less directly by mental health issues.

10AM SUNDAY 13 APRIL CROQUET AND BBQ LUNCH

Elwood Croquet Club,
cnr Marine Pde and Head St Elwood..

The morning will include croquet, instructions from experts and a lovely BBQ lunch. **Bring family, children and grandchildren very welcome. Note -family price.**

Places are limited. Please book early to secure your place and to assist programming.

To Book for Croquet and BBQ Lunch:

1. deposit donation ($10pensioners / $15 non-pensioners **AND FAMILY RATE OF $25 – unlimited numbers welcomed as your 'family of choice')** to Westpac ISFAF Community One A/c: BSB 033-169 A/c 258307,
2. make sure your booking shows your name and the names of others in your booking. Please advise if any are children and their ages.
3. email judi.burstyner@gmail.com with proof of booking.
4. Please double check that your email shows:
   i. the names of those for whom you have booked,
   ii. any special dietary needs. We will try our best to cater to these but please check bat the time,
   iii. if you do not want to appear on any photos. (if so, please try to position yourself away from the centre to help us take photos without you)

Confirmatory email will be sent by Friday 11 April. If you do not receive the confirmatory email but have paid, email judi.burstyner@gmail.com urgently and by 5 pm Saturday 12 April.

If you have questions regarding the bookings, please. do not hesitate to contact Judi directly on mobile 0425 723 746 or judi.burstyner@gmail.com

Deadline for bookings: 6 pm Wednesday 9 April

ELWOOD BEACH WALK 'N CHAT ON THE 1ST, 3RD AND 5th TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

PLEASE NOTE that by demand – it has been decided that Walk n Chats are so enjoyable that we will include the fifth Tuesday of the month (when there is one!) Family members, including canines are very welcome.

Walkers generally meet at 1pm, with non-walkers joining us at 2.15pm for a drink provided by ISFAF.

Please book on the day prior to walk or by 10am on the day of the walk: Ph: Alexis 0423 939 949
Meeting place will be advised when you book. Bookings essential - times and starting points may vary,

Some 2025 Tuesday Walk 'n Chat dates to diarize:
18 March, 1, 15, 29 April.

For more dates to diarize PTO →

June 27-29 Weekend in Bendigo

Programme includes: Respite and Workshops:

- Friday afternoon visit to Frida Khalo Exhibition,
- Workshops facilitated by Gabby Cohen, currently seconded to DHS as Implementation Advisor, from Manager, Addiction Health, Alfred Mental and Addiction Health,
- Accommodation,

Details tba. Keep an eye on our website:
https://ispaf.org/

Please join us and bring others to our Pre-Election Forum on 8 April.

If you need help with transport or have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact Judi at
email judi.burstyner@gmail.com M: 0425 723 746.

Don't forget that wasting paper and using snail mail are things of the past – email judi.burstyner@gmail.com to join our 'email only' group, but, despite the image below, we will retain paper where required.

Looking forward to seeing you all at our coming fun functions. Croquet is a family event.

Keep your eyes on our website for further updates

https://ispaf.org/

Regards,

Judi, on behalf of the ISFAF committee.