

Media Release

A Better Way – Unifying the Tasmanian Mental Health System

This morning, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) stood shoulder-to-shoulder with our members from the community-managed mental health Sector to call on government to drive positive change and develop a world-class, unified mental health system by committing to **three points of action** (outlined below).

MHCT was joined by mental health consumers and carers, as well as leaders from Colony 47, OzHelp Tasmania, The Link Youth Health Services, Flourish Mental Health Action in our Hands Inc., Baptcare and Mental Health Carers Tasmania to call for public, private and community-based mental health providers including health professionals, to work together within a unified, solutions-based approach.

We implored governments to commit to the development of a seamless mental health service for all Tasmanians to access supports, at any stage, not just when they are acutely unwell. MHCT and its members called on:

1. **All providers across the mental health sector to work together, to be unified, to work towards services designed and delivered with the needs of consumers and carers taking priority.** By doing this, we hope to see people getting help at home and support through local services and programs from an array of providers working together.
2. **Governments to publicly commit to working towards preventative health and early intervention (a Stepped Model of Care).** This model will see people cared for in the community before they become so unwell they need to go to hospital. We want to see more beds for people in community-based care (for example, The Peacock Centre), where people can be close to family, friends and primary health supports.
3. **Governments to commit to the development of a centralised, comprehensive service that provides our community members, General Practitioners and primary care providers with a mainstream service that provides tailored advice, information and referral pathways to all available services (public, private and community-based), anywhere at any time.** This will enable people to understand and access clinical or non-clinical support options well before someone is acutely unwell. This service to be available to access in their homes and/or within local communities.

Mental Health Council CEO, Connie Digolis, said, *“Today, our sector stood together to implore our governments to commit to three specific areas of action, to transform the mental health system for Tasmanians. We stood united in our belief that good mental health is a basic human right for every Tasmanian and that no-one should be allowed to become acutely unwell before accessing the care and supports they and their families need.*

There has been an ongoing, and frankly, unhelpful focus on the perceived need for acute mental health beds, with Tasmanians being sold an idea that not only are acute mental health hospital beds the ‘answer’, but that by creating more acute beds, all the problems will be fixed.

We stood together to demand a move away right now from a system that treats unwell people - to one that supports people to be well. This is not rocket science. Prevention and intervention is proven to work for all other health conditions, mental health included, and we just need to put it into practice - now.

Surely a successful mental health system should be measured not by having acute beds available, but rather by providing the supports and services in a way that avoids the need for hospital in the first place. There is a better way – and it’s unifying the mental health system.”



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Whilst we recognise that hospital care is an important option, MHCT and our members strongly believe readily available mental health supports delivered in our communities by a professional, capable and innovative community managed mental health service will more effectively support Tasmanians experiencing mental ill health.

For support and guidelines on reporting or portrayal of suicide or mental illness, visit [Mindframe](#)

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Connie Digolis, CEO, Mental Health Council of Tasmania is available for interview. Other sector representatives available on request.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

*ENDS

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Left to right: Diane Hawkridge, Wellways; Debbie Evans, CEO, Lifeline Tasmania; Connie Digolis, CEO, Mental Health Council of Tasmania; Debra Fast, Service Manager Mental Health, Bapcare; Malcolm Hales, Mental health carer; Maxine Griffith, CEO, Mental Health Carers Tasmania; and Hannah Godfrey, mental health consumer



Left to right: Diane Hawkridge, Wellways; Debbie Evans, CEO, Lifeline Tasmania; Debra Fast, Bapcare; Malcolm Hales, Mental health carer; Maxine Griffith, CEO, Mental Health Carers Tasmania; Hannah Godfrey, mental health consumer; Clare Pearson, Executive Officer, OzHelp Tasmania; Miranda Ashby, Centre Manager, The Link Youth Health Services; Glen O'Keefe, Manager Youth Solutions, Colony 47; and headspace representative.



Hannah Godfrey, Headspace Youth Consumer representative