

Mental Health Coordinating Council

# Annual Report 2022-2023



## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work.

## **Recognition of Lived Experience**

We recognise and value people with lived experience of mental health conditions and are informed by their insight and expertise in our work.

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# VISION, PURPOSE, VALUES



## VISION

People living with mental health conditions are supported to live meaningful lives in the communities of their choice.

## PURPOSE

Promote mental health and wellbeing in NSW by championing a strong community mental health sector through leadership, advocacy and support.

## VALUES

**Integrity.** We are honest, ethical and accountable in everything we do.

**Collaboration.** We listen, respect the contribution of others and work with our partners to advance our vision.

**Leadership.** We are credible, influential and strategic.

**Impact.** We make a positive difference and with our members, drive reform, sustainability and system improvements.

# CEO REPORT

I was both honoured and delighted to assume the role of Chief Executive Officer at Mental Health Coordinating Council in June 2023.



I have long admired the organisation for providing leadership and support as the peak body for the community managed mental health sector, so it is with excitement that I take on the role. As I embark on this new journey, I wish to convey my unwavering dedication and steadfast commitment to advocating for the sector and our members.

Much of the work I have done previously and the governance roles I have held have brought me to this position with an ability to understand and act for our members. I want to deepen that understanding and work with you all to meet the challenges and opportunities our sector faces.

To begin my term, I have embarked on a listening tour, connecting with as many key members and sector leaders as possible. It has been an invaluable experience to engage in meaningful conversations, hear concerns and gain a better understanding of the issues and priorities our members want us to champion. I extend my gratitude to our members who have generously shared their time and insights with me.

One significant observation since joining MHCC is the multitude of ongoing reviews in the mental health sector. We are actively working to contribute substantively to these discussions, advocating tirelessly for the community sector's pivotal role. We are pleased to be part of these vital conversations and are eager to see positive outcomes from the work being done.

The release of our major report *Shifting the Balance: Investment priorities for mental health in NSW*, made an important contribution to the discussion around

mental health reform challenges. The report emphasises the important role and value of community organisations in the delivery of key mental health services and supports. We have been consistently advocating this message at every opportunity.

I extend my gratitude to the MHCC Board, particularly our Chair Judi Higgin, for their warm welcome and unwavering support during my early days with the organisation. Your extraordinary encouragement and guidance are invaluable, and I am confident that it will be a strength as I grow with MHCC.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to our member organisations for their ongoing support and counsel, as well as our partner organisations, including the Ministry of Health and the NSW Mental Health Commission, with who we collaborate closely.

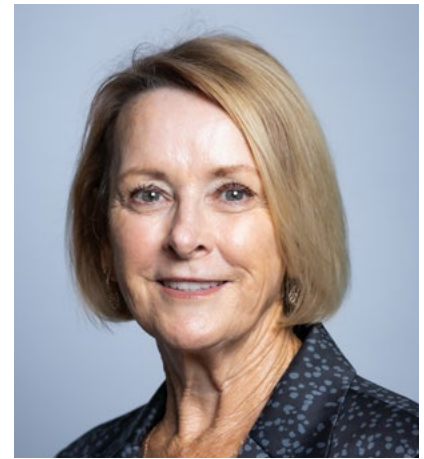
Lastly, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the incredible team at MHCC. Although small in number, you consistently demonstrate extraordinary commitment to the sector and a steadfast dedication to improving the lives of those with lived experience of mental health conditions. I eagerly anticipate the collaborative work we will undertake in the months and years ahead.

With our members' continued support, dedication and shared vision, MHCC is poised to make a profound impact on the mental health landscape. Together, we can continue to make strides for our member organisations, the sector and people with lived experience of mental health conditions.

**Dr Evelyne Tadros**  
CEO

# CHAIR REPORT

In 2023 Mental Health Coordinating Council marked a significant milestone, celebrating 40 years of representing community managed mental health organisations who work to support people living with mental health conditions.



Over the last four decades MHCC has emerged as a leading peak body championing a strong community mental health sector through leadership, advocacy and support.

Our purpose remains the same, to promote mental health and wellbeing in NSW for people living with mental health conditions to live meaningful lives in the communities of their choice. The world and the sector though have changed significantly since 1983 and as we celebrate our 40th year, it is clear there is still much work to be done to improve the lives of the people we work to support. I take pride in witnessing MHCC's unwavering commitment to being at the forefront of this essential work.

As we move into a new decade, we warmly welcome Dr Evelyne Tadros as our new CEO. Evelyne brings a wealth of skills and experience that align well with our vision of fostering strength within the community mental health sector. Her appointment in June 2023 was a great moment for us to look to the future for MHCC and the broader community we serve. I look forward to working with Evelyne and thank her for her commitment and drive.

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to our outgoing CEO, Carmel Tebbutt, for her outstanding leadership from 2018 to 2023. Carmel's tireless dedication and visionary leadership have strengthened relationships with key decision-makers, expanded access to services and advocated for policy reforms to address systemic challenges. Her strategic vision and ability to navigate complex landscapes have been instrumental in developing vital partnerships and positioning MHCC as a sector leader.

We wish Carmel well in her new challenges and hope she stays connected to MHCC and the sector.

As we face increasing pressures, particularly demand for services and workforce challenges, the Board has worked diligently and constructively to provide effective leadership and guidance to MHCC. Our commitment to the vision and mission of MHCC are strong and we see it makes a difference when we look at the positive responses in our most recent Member Representative Survey. The results once again show our Members support the work and direction of MHCC as it aligns with our current Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024. There was convincing endorsement for the work we do in representing the sector, leveraging and supporting the capacity of community managed organisations and developing a skilled and sustainable workforce.

Next year the Board will be working with CEO Evelyne Tadros and the MHCC team to develop a new three year strategy to take MHCC into the future with confidence, strengthening what we do best and responding to the needs of the sector.

Thank you to all directors for your contributions, expertise and insights over the last 12 months. You make a difference, and it is a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated and supportive group. I particularly want to acknowledge departing director Peter Gianfrancesco for his contribution. I look forward to MHCC's continued collaboration and achievements together.

**Judi Higgin**  
Chair

# OUR IMPACT

## LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY



**103**

members,  
**63** ordinary members,  
**9** associate members,  
**31** friends



**102**

key stakeholder  
meetings and forums



**23**

submissions and  
policy responses



**81**

sector updates  
**9,685** newsletter subscribers



**88%**

of members **agree** that  
MHCC is a respected peak  
body for the community-  
managed mental health  
sector.

## CAPACITY AND QUALITY



**18**

sector resources and  
publications



**12**

events held  
**800** event attendees



**1,075**

students enrolled in our  
training courses. **98%** of  
feedback on our training  
courses was positive



**81%**

of members **agree** that  
MHCC **builds the capacity**  
of community managed  
organisations through  
delivering training,  
developing resources and  
holding networking events.





## CULTURE AND EFFECTIVENESS



**2935**

followers across  
social media



**27**

media releases and  
news stories



**900**

new followers  
across social media



**206,352**

web page views



**93,814**

people reached across  
social media



**69,103**

web page visitors

# OUR BOARD 2022-2023

Full biographies available at [mhcc.org.au](https://mhcc.org.au)



**Judi Higgin**

**Chair**

Finance and Audit  
Committee, Member



**Dario Molina**

**Treasurer**

Finance and Audit  
Committee, Chair



**Jonathan Harms**

**Director**



**Mariam Faraj**

**Director**

Governance and Compliance  
Committee, Chair



**Justin McKenzie**

**Director**

Finance and Audit  
Committee, Member



**Priscilla Brice**

**Director**

Governance and Compliance  
Committee, Member



**Mark Orr**

**Director**

Finance and Audit  
Committee, Member  
Governance and Compliance  
Committee, Member



**Kirsten Jordan**

**Director**

Governance and Compliance  
Committee, Member



**Peter Gianfrancesco**

**Director**



# Leadership & Advocacy

We provide a strong voice for community-managed mental health organisations by engaging with decision-makers and supporting the delivery of effective co-designed services for people with lived experience of mental health conditions.



# SETTING OUT THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT PRIORITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH

Although mental health services and supports have received both an increase in focus and investment in New South Wales, Mental Health Coordinating Council is conscious there is a need to further examine what is working well and to highlight where the gaps are to inform future funding.



To address the challenges, MHCC developed a major new report, *Shifting the Balance: Investment priorities for mental health in NSW*, in late 2022. The report makes a valuable contribution to the mental health reform discussion with an emphasis on the community managed mental health sector.

*Shifting the Balance* identifies priorities for investment which would improve outcomes for people living with mental health conditions across NSW and utilise scarce resources more effectively through reduced emergency department presentations and hospital admissions.

The work identified four key priorities for investment in the sector which will support people to realise their recovery goals and live meaningful lives in their communities.

- 1. Increase mental health support in the community** by providing an additional 10,000 community living support packages over four years.
- 2. Establish a network of 'Step-Up Step-Down' services** around the state for people to transition out of hospital or avoid crisis.
- 3. Improve access to youth supports** by establishing an additional 10 specialist, face-to-face youth services and enhancing the five existing services.
- 4. Invest in Workforce** provide adequate indexation and allow for five year rolling contracts.

*Shifting the Balance* served as the cornerstone for a separate submission developed in the lead up to the NSW Election. That submission was presented as a crucial component of our pre-election advocacy efforts to engage with all NSW Members of Parliament ahead of the election in March 2023.

After receiving the report, several MPs extended invitations to our then CEO, Carmel Tebbutt, for subsequent meetings to delve deeper into the discussion and recommendations.

MHCC collaborated to produce *Shifting the Balance* with member organisations, including consumer and carer groups, to highlight key areas that require additional investment and present the compelling case for change.



We would like to acknowledge the following organisations and their representatives for their contribution to the Report, Aidan Conway, Flourish Australia, , Kathi Boorman, One Door Mental Health, Stephanie Smith, One Door Mental Health, Alison Bradley, Grand Pacific Health, Justin McKenzie, Wellways Australia, Peter Gianfrancesco, Neami National, Priscilla Brice, BEING Mental Health Consumers, William Campos, Independent Community Living Australia, Jonathan Harms, Mental Health Carers NSW, Siobhan Bryson and Dylan Weave, WEAVE Youth & Community Services.

We also acknowledge KPMG who undertook research for the report to demonstrate the economic arguments in support of the additional investment.

***Shifting the Balance*** was launched in November 2022.

## Community Managed Mental Health: Incoming Government Brief

Following the election of a new State Government in March 2023, MHCC developed an Incoming Government Brief.

The Incoming Government Brief set out the role and value of non-government, community managed organisations in the delivery of key mental health services and supports and outlined opportunities for the incoming government to prioritise support to people living with mental health conditions in NSW.

### Priority actions identified for the new government

- > Work with the Australian Government to address the gap in psychosocial services outside the NDIS.
- > Complete the NSW gap analysis of psychosocial support services.
- > Consider the introduction of a mental health surcharge similar to the payroll levy in Victoria and Queensland.
- > Adequate indexation that responds to the impact of inflation.
- > Action to urgently address gaps in the mental health workforce.
- > Support and resourcing for the rapidly growing lived experience workforces.
- > Rolling five year contracts based on ongoing review and achievement of objectives.

**Read the brief on our website.**

# TRIBUTE TO OUTGOING CEO CARMEL TEBBUTT

In June 2023 Mental Health Coordinating Council farewelled former CEO Carmel Tebbutt and thanked her for delivering for the sector, being a great humanitarian and an inspirational leader.



As CEO from 2018 to 2023, Carmel successfully championed the mental health sector, strengthening crucial relationships with key decision makers, expanding access to services and advocating for policy reforms to address systemic challenges.

Through her commitment to increased investment in the sector, strategic vision and ability to navigate complex landscapes, Carmel developed vital partnerships, secured funding and strongly positioned the organisation and sector within the mental health system.

By fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment, Carmel nurtured the organisation and team at MHCC, supporting MHCC to make a meaningful difference.

Carmel successfully transitioned to the community sector after nearly 20 years in the NSW Parliament, where she held a range of senior ministerial portfolios including Health, Education, Community Services and the Environment. She was the first woman to be Deputy Premier in NSW.

MHCC and the sector was sad to farewell Carmel but wishes her every success in her role as CEO of Odyssey House NSW.

## MHCC welcomes new CEO Dr Evelyne Tadros

As Carmel stepped out of the job, MHCC welcomed former Mission Australia State Leader NSW Metro, Dr Evelyne Tadros as the new CEO of the peak body.

MHCC welcomes the opportunity for Dr Tadros to bring her skills and experience to the pivotal role and drive the future direction of our organisation.

Evelyne brings experience of governance, compliance and leadership from her role as former Chair Homelessness NSW and current positions as St John Ambulance Board Director and on the Risk, Governance and Nominations Committee with St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW).



At the time of her appointment, Evelyne said she was humbled and delighted to be joining MHCC and to work with its members and those with lived experience of mental health conditions on reform and service improvements.

MHCC Chair Judi Higgin said at the time of her appointment that Evelyne brings great energy and experience to the role and she looks forward to the strong leadership and passion she will bring to the sector.



# CEO & SENIOR MANAGERS FORUM VALUABLE EVENT FOR SECTOR LEADERS

Annually, MHCC's flagship CEO Forum serves as a crucial platform for leaders in the community-based mental health sector to come together to connect, collectively problem-solve and discuss ways to move the sector forward.



From left: Nicole Yade, WAGEC, Amy Wyndham, NSW Health, Corinne Henderson, MHCC, Drikus Van der Merwe, Stride, Ben McAlpine, NCOSS and Michelle Blanchard, formerly National Mental Health Commission.

In May 2023, the *CEO & Senior Managers Forum* provided sector leaders with an opportunity to engage in insightful discussions encompassing various areas of focus for the sector currently, including the NDIS Review and the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.

The event included an insightful panel discussion with panellists Amy Wyndham, Director of Community Partnerships at the Mental Health Branch of NSW Health, Nicole Yade, Director of Client Operations at Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre, Drikus Van der Merwe, Chief Executive Officer at Stride Mental Health and Ben McAlpine, Director of Advocacy and Policy/Acting Chief Executive at NSW Council of Social Services.

We were also pleased to welcome Dr Michelle Blanchard who delivered a presentation on the development of the National Mental Health Commission's National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy.

Dr Blanchard discussed the contrasting elements involved in tackling stigma and discrimination, highlighting how the Strategy has integrated this understanding to bring about meaningful change.

"People with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, mental illness and distress have told us time and time again that stigma and discrimination impact all facets of their lives. It's time to change this," Dr Blanchard told the gathered group.

The CEO Forum was held at Marrickville Pavilion and hosted by MHCC Principal Policy Advisor Corinne Henderson.

# SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THE SECTOR IN A NEW FILM

As an organisation working in the community sector, we know the profound difference our sector makes in the lives of people living with mental health conditions.

It is not often, however, that our work and sector receives the recognition it deserves.

This is what motivated Mental Health Coordinating Council's communications and advocacy team to embark on the production of a powerful new film that shares the impact and casts the spotlight on the sector.

At the heart of *Finding Hope Together* is the story of the mental health support one woman received, and how it reshaped her life.

But more than that, the short film shows the far-reaching impact of the work being done by mental health organisations in the community to support people living with mental health conditions.

Produced in early 2023, *Finding Hope Together* celebrates the dedication, commitment and impact community workers and organisations are having.

*Finding Hope* features interviews with Cindy Hoang, Wellways participant, Recovery and Rehabilitation Worker Aaron Perez, MHCC Board member Kirsten Jordan, State Leader for Mission Australia and MHCC's CEO Dr Evelyne Tadros.

In the video, Kirsten describes the work and philosophy driving community managed mental health organisations.

'We meet people where they're at, and it's very much focused on them as the individual – their needs, what their goals are, what they're interested in,' says Kirsten.

Aaron discusses his compassionate and thoughtful approach to his role as a HASI Team Leader.

'When you spend time with someone who makes you feel seen and heard, that allows you to feel comfortable and to open up a







bit more with people,” Aaron Perez from Wellways Australia tells the audience.

The film runs for approximately five minutes and premiered at a launch in March 2023. It went on to feature as part of MHCC’s 40th celebration events. The film is permanently housed on the MHCC website homepage. Shorter versions were produced and shown on MHCC’s social media channels.

**We thank everyone involved in the production of the film for their support and talent, particularly Cindy and the team at Wellways Bankstown.**



# LAUNCH OF NEW LGBTQ+ INCLUSIVE AND AFFIRMING PRACTICE GUIDELINES

In February 2023, Mental Health Coordinating Council partnered with ACON, the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies and the Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network to release guidelines that support workers across the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors in the provision of LGBTQ+ inclusive practice.

The *LGBTQ+ Inclusive & Affirming Practice Guidelines* were created to ensure that trauma-informed, recovery-oriented and person-led principles are at the centre of the practice approach for organisations supporting LGBTQ+ people in the community.

The guidelines offer detailed and accessible recommendations for providers in NSW and outline the four key principles of LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming practice.

These principles are:

- > Trauma-informed recovery-oriented and person-led practice
- > Intersectionality
- > Community consultation and co-design, co-production, co-implementation and co-evaluation
- > Family inclusive practice



Because this publication was produced offering guidance for public, private, and community managed mental health and human services sector workers in mind, diverse components of service delivery are covered.

These include:

- > Staff development
- > Cultural safety and visibility
- > Intake procedures and data collection
- > Identity disclosure
- > Therapeutic relationships
- > Support planning

The result is a comprehensive guide informed by a diverse group of organisations all working towards the goal of providing inclusive services to LGBTQ+ people who want support that affirms their identities.



# CMHDARN: HIGHLIGHTS AND MILESTONES FROM 2022-2023

The Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN) is a partnership project between the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies, Mental Health Coordinating Council and the NSW Mental Health Commission.



CMHDARN was established to broaden involvement of the community mental health and alcohol and other drugs sector in practice-based research and to promote the value of research and the use of research evidence in practice.

## Work CMHDARN undertakes

CMHDARN aims to facilitate the development of a culture of research by providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas, the sharing of resources, support and collaboration among community organisations and between community organisations and research bodies, including universities and research institutes.

Through CMHDARN's resources, activities and information sharing, the group hopes to increase awareness and understanding of co-existing mental health and alcohol and other drug issues.

## Highlights for 2022-2023

- > Hosting five successful webinars to support research capacity building and promote translational research initiatives for the mental health and alcohol and other drugs sectors.
- > The co-production of the Co-design Kickstarter resource.
- > Development of a resource to support effective engagement and remuneration of people with lived experience in research (Acknowledgement Matters).
- > the ongoing devising and distribution of CMHDARN Connect – a newsletter that focuses on mental health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) research and the promotion of evidence-based resources.

A particular highlight during this year was the presentation of the *Co-production Kickstarter* resource (published in March 2022) to delegates at the THeMHs Conference in October 2022.

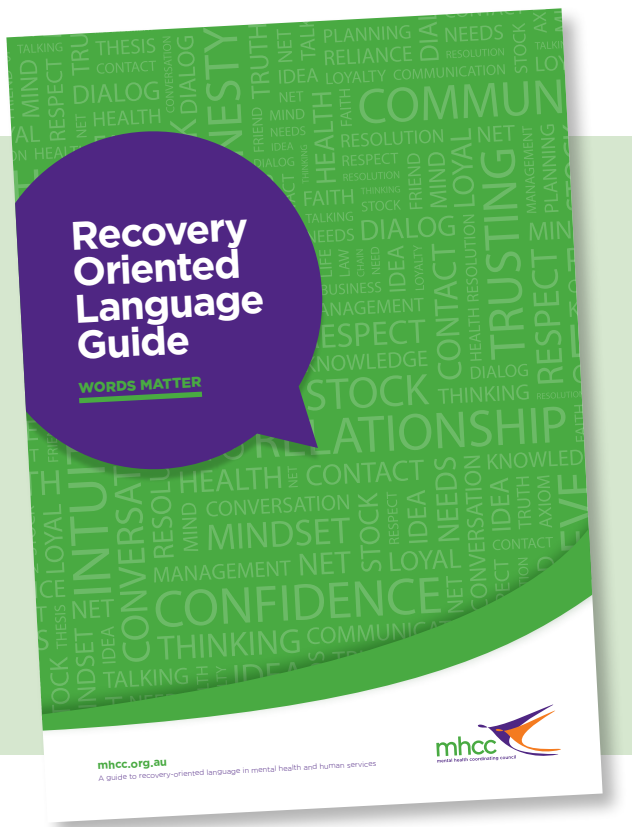
Connections to community-managed and non-government, academic and government organisations also expanded during this period.

Collaborative work conducted included working with representatives from the Black Dog Institute, Inside Out & Associates Australia, Northern Sydney LHD, University of Sydney, University of NSW and University of Technology (Sydney).

The CMHDARN partnership between MHCC, NADA and the Mental Health Commission of NSW continues to provide an important opportunity for the mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors to collaborate not only across community-based services, but more broadly across service systems and academia.

# UPDATED AND REVITALISED RECOVERY ORIENTED LANGUAGE GUIDE

To encourage the use of respectful and validating language, Mental Health Coordinating Council launched a new and updated version of our popular *Recovery Oriented Language Guide* in July 2022.



MHCC recognised the need to produce a revised and enhanced version of the much-used Guide following increased demand for mental health services in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and compounding natural disasters, which amplified the imperative for inclusive, safe and positive mental health support.

This latest version is the third, and most extensively updated, edition of the Guide which was first published in 2013.

The Guide is recognised as a valuable resource widely used across service and support settings around the country.

## Why words matter

Wrong or inappropriate words can contribute to the stigma experienced by people living with mental health conditions, hampering their recovery and willingness to seek support.

The *Recovery Oriented Language Guide* encourages the use of respectful and validating language across service settings, ensuring that workers and supporters convey hope and optimism when discussing mental health.

The language guide includes helpful lists of destigmatising language and useful Do's and Don'ts to help reframe language positively.

Tips include saying someone 'has been diagnosed with...' rather than 'is mentally ill', not arguing with a person's perception of events or feelings, but rather asking if they feel they have been listened to, turning statements like 'they refused help' around to 'they prefer not to...' and 'they are anti-social' for 'they are working on finding motivation'.

New sections were added in the latest publication, including how to talk about suicide, diversity inclusive language, talking to young people, guides for interactions between clinicians and language in the written word.

In 2022, the Guide hit another milestone, extending its reach with the release of its first foreign translation in Norwegian.

**The *Recovery Oriented Language Guide* is available for free download on our website.**

Printed copies are distributed to members, mental health workplaces and consumers.





## Words matter

Our language needs to be:

- > respectful
- > non-judgemental
- > clear and understandable
- > free of jargon, confusing data, and speculative comment
- > consistent with our body language
- > sincere in carrying a sense of commitment, hope and presenting the potential for opportunity
- > trauma-informed
- > strengths-based.

## Recovery Oriented Language Guide

WORDS MATTER

Words are important. The language we use and the stories we tell have great significance. Find words that carry a sense of hope and possibility.

### FIND THE RIGHT WORDS

✗	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sam is crazy, insane, nuts, mental</li> <li>Sam is bipolar</li> <li>Sam is an addict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sam lives with a mental health condition</li> <li>Sam is a person with lived experience of...</li> <li>Sam has been told they have...</li> <li>Sam has been diagnosed with...</li> <li>Sam is a person who experiences mental health and co-occurring substance use</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gurpreet is manipulative, irritable</li> <li>Gurpreet has challenging or complex behaviours</li> <li>Gurpreet is dangerous, abusive, angry or aggressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gurpreet is trying hard to self-advocate</li> <li>Gurpreet is working on more effective ways of getting their needs met</li> <li>Gurpreet tends to (describe the actions) when upset</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ira is anti-social</li> <li>Ira is isolative</li> <li>Ira rejects help</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ira is finding it difficult to socialise</li> <li>Ira likes their own company</li> <li>Ira has not yet found anything that sparks their interest</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsuccessful suicide</li> <li>Committed suicide or Commit suicide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made an attempt on their life</li> <li>Died by suicide</li> <li>Ended their own life</li> </ul>

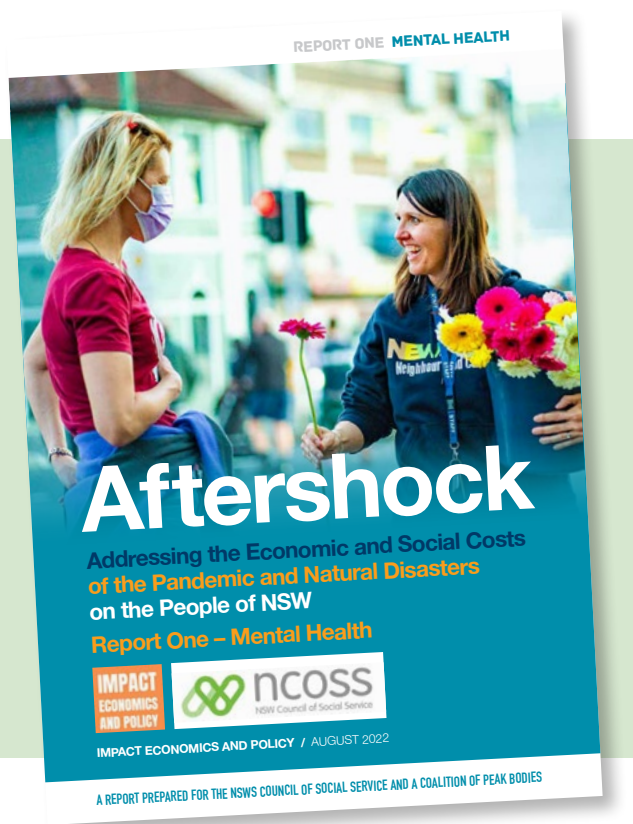
One way to embed recovery language in your work is to talk as though the people you are speaking about will hear or read what you say.

Full version of the Recovery Oriented Language Guide available at [mhcc.org.au/our-work/resources](http://mhcc.org.au/our-work/resources) or scan the QR code to download the guide.



# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS HEAVY TOLL ON MENTAL HEALTH FOLLOWING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The heavy, ongoing toll on the mental health of people from the COVID-19 pandemic and concurring natural disasters was highlighted in a report launched in August 2022 by NSW Council of Social Service, with Mental Health Coordinating Council and a coalition of peak bodies.



*Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters* estimated a 21 percent increase in the number of people in NSW self-reporting mental health issues consistent with depression or anxiety.

The report, authored by *Impact Economics and Policy*, illustrated the urgent need for additional, culturally appropriate mental health services and supports in the community.

Key indicators of poor mental health identified in *Aftershock* included:

- > 13% of the NSW adult population has developed a new mental health issue since the start of the pandemic, with an even higher number (20%) of 18-29 year olds
- > 9.3% increase in prescriptions for depressive disorders across Australia (2018 – 2021). This is double the rate of increase for all other medications over the same period
- > 46% increase in emergency department presentations among 12 – 17 year old females for self-harm and suicidal thoughts across NSW between 2018 and 2021.

The peak bodies involved in the production of the report urged the NSW Government to respond to the dire need through a range of targeted investments, including additional psychosocial support packages and ‘step-up, step-down’ beds.

Community mental health services were identified as vital in responding to disasters as they reduce the burden of mental health conditions by supporting recovery and minimising the severity and long-term risks.

**You can read the report in detail on our website.**

# SUPPORT FOR THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

The 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart invited Australians to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices through the establishment of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission.

The Australian Government announced on 23 March 2023 that it would hold a referendum asking the Australian people whether they agree to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia through the establishment of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

## Our commitment

Mental Health Coordinating Council's Board made the decision to support the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament at their final meeting of 2022.

A statement was released on 23 January 2023 setting out the organisation's commitment to the substantive constitutional change and structural reform required to form the Voice to Parliament.

Throughout the campaign, MHCC provided

leadership for the sector by providing resources and information through our channels to facilitate understanding and conversation for those in the mental health sector in the lead up to the referendum.

We supported the work of our members who almost uniformly came out in support for The Voice, built around awareness of the mental health burden on First Nations populations.

As an organisation, MHCC is dedicated to building understanding and improving outcomes for First Nations people, particularly improvements in their social and emotional wellbeing.

Supporting the Voice to Parliament was an opportunity for MHCC to reiterate its support for First Nations people and the critical need to improve mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

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## UPDATES TO ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST NATIONS RESOURCES

Mental Health Coordinating Council's Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Mental Health resource hub received a significant revamp during 2022-2023.

The resource aims to help carers, supporters and organisational leaders in mental health services work collaboratively and respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The update enhanced the resources on the hub by offering a wider range of culturally safe and sensitive resources, complete with explanations and supportive links.

Navigation, user experience and overall layout were improved as part of the revamp.

MHCC has continued its commitment to the improvement of wellbeing outcomes for First Nations Australians by making culturally safe and sensitive resources available with explanations and supportive links to anyone working in the mental health and community sectors.

**You can access this resource through our website.**



# ADVOCACY

Mental Health Coordinating Council provides leadership and representation for community-managed organisations in New South Wales.

## In NSW

MHCC works in consultation with our members and other interested stakeholders to advocate for legislative and systemic reform, through submissions, position papers and informal advocacy to both State and Commonwealth Governments, the Ministry of Health, Mental Health Branch and other departments, agencies, and commissions.

- > **Council for Intellectual Disability**  
Supported Decision-Making Position Paper
- > **Headspace**  
Recovery Language usage in the context of co-existing conditions
- > **NSW Government | Council of Social Services**  
Aftershock: Addressing the Economic and Social Costs of the Pandemic and Natural Disasters
- > **NSW Government | Department of Communities and Justice**  
Disability Advocacy Futures Program
- > **NSW Government | Department of Communities and Justice**  
Independent Review Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019
- > **NSW Government | KPMG / Department of Premier and Cabinet**  
NSW Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy
- > **NSW Government | Ministry of Health, Mental Health Branch**  
NSW Peer Workforce Framework
- > **NSW Government | NSW Health**  
Clinical care of people who may be suicidal
- > **University of Sydney | Faculty of Medicine and Health**  
NDIS access barriers for people living with psychosocial disability Research Project
- > **University of Sydney | Brain and Mind Centre**  
Brain and Mind Policy Position Paper review

## Nationally

We work nationally with Commonwealth and other State-based peak bodies to promote and build a viable and sustainable community-managed mental health sector Australia-wide.

- > **Attorney General's Department**  
A new system of federal administrative review
- > **Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health**  
National Safety and Quality Mental Health Standards for Community Managed Organisations
- > **Australian Government | Ageing and Disability Commission**  
Submission on strategy and actions to promote Supported Decision-Making
- > **Australian Government | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**  
The National Disability Insurance Scheme Review
- > **Australian Government | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**  
The National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy
- > **Australian Government | Department of Veterans' Affairs**  
Mental health and wellbeing support services for Australian veterans and their families
- > **Australian Government | Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme**  
Capability and Culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency
- > **CMHA/Queensland Alliance Mental Health**  
Draft Disability Inclusion Bill Review
- > **Equally Well**  
National Initiatives & Activities Scan
- > **National Legal Aid**  
'With You': Trauma-Informed Training
- > **National Mental Health Commission - Connections 2022**  
Consultation Comments

# Capacity & Quality

We support the growing capacity of the community-managed mental health sector through the promotion of best-practice approaches, skill development, a sustainable workforce and stronger research and data collection.



# LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MHCC makes significant contributions to developing the capacity of the community mental health sector by developing a skilled and sustainable workforce. MHCC is committed to providing nationally recognised training programs in mental health, along with best-in-class professional development courses carefully designed in accordance with recovery-oriented practice principles. These programs are facilitated by our team of highly professional, dedicated trainers, ensuring the highest quality in education and skill development.

## Training the housing sector

This year saw continued mental health awareness training sessions delivered to a range of community housing providers and the development of five online videos highlighting key aspects of the training. Training included recognising and responding to mental distress, understanding the mental health system in NSW and referral pathways for community housing workers. The program is funded by NSW Health in collaboration with Ministry of Health, in a MHCC partnership with the Community Housing Industry Association of NSW (CHIA) to co-deliver mental health training to the community housing provider workforce.

*“To address the issues... is to think about the way colonisation has removed us from our own economic base and our long-established support structures and set us up to be at the margins of economic participation and citizenship in Australia. The expectation that we will be homeless, that we won't be homeowners, that we'll be existing in the margins of towns and in the peripheries of cities and society is the form of colonisation that endures that we need to undo.”*

- Jennifer Newman, Wiradjuri woman, CHIA NSW from the video ‘Creating a culturally safe environment’.

*“I loved learning about appropriate language to be used and the mental health organisations and services available,”*

- Training participant

MHCC thanks Shane Jakupiec from Neami National for his participation and leadership in understanding the mental health system in NSW.

## TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

Funded by the NSW Ministry of Health, four online Introduction to Trauma Informed Practice sessions were created in addition to MHCC's face to face Understanding and Responding to Trauma course. These online sessions aim to increase accessibility of training for the community and public mental health sector across NSW. The sessions included ‘What is Trauma’, ‘Safety Making’, ‘Living with Trauma’ and ‘Vicarious Trauma’. The online sessions were met with high demand and positive feedback with a strong demand for these sessions to be delivered again in future.

## PEER NAVIGATION

The development of a new unit of competency in Peer Navigation has made significant progress with feedback from a range of peer workers and peer leaders across NSW and Australia. Funded by the Mental Health Commission of NSW, the unit has passed Stage 1 approval with the Australian Skills Quality Authority and is proceeding to final submission for inclusion in MHCC's Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work.



## PEER LEADERSHIP

MHCC continues to take a leadership role in supporting and developing the Mental Health Peer Workforce. The accredited Peer Leadership course was piloted in early 2023 and has since had four more deliveries. The purpose of this course is to create further learning and development pathways and support in career progression for existing and emerging mental health peer workers.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM UPDATE

The Learning and Development team has continued to grow with the addition of new team members over the course of 2022-2023. Jo Kain commenced as Mental Health Peer Work Trainer and Assessor after completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment through MHCC's trainee trainer program, funded by the NSW Ministry of Health. In 2023, MHCC's long standing Mental Health Peer Work Trainer and Assessor Emma Paino moved on from her role. MHCC thanks Emma for her significant contribution over the last five years and the enduring legacy and impact she continues to have in the mental health and peer work sector more broadly.

### Testimonials

“The webinars felt like small communities of practice and often allowed for extra networking development and engagement amongst peers.”

“It was an enjoyable course and an honour to be part of the first groups to undertake it. The content was relevant to my role and sector, meeting other peers across the state in diverse roles, being able to explore challenges and perspectives, identifying and addressing gaps in my organisation, further building my skills, networking and collaborating.”

– Peer Leadership participants



**927** professional development participants



**84** professional development courses delivered



**140** professional development scholarships delivered



**148** new accredited training students



**13** new accredited training courses held



**96** Peer Work scholarships offered to individuals



**52** Peer Leadership Scholarships offered to existing and emerging mental health peer leaders



**98%** positive evaluations of training from students



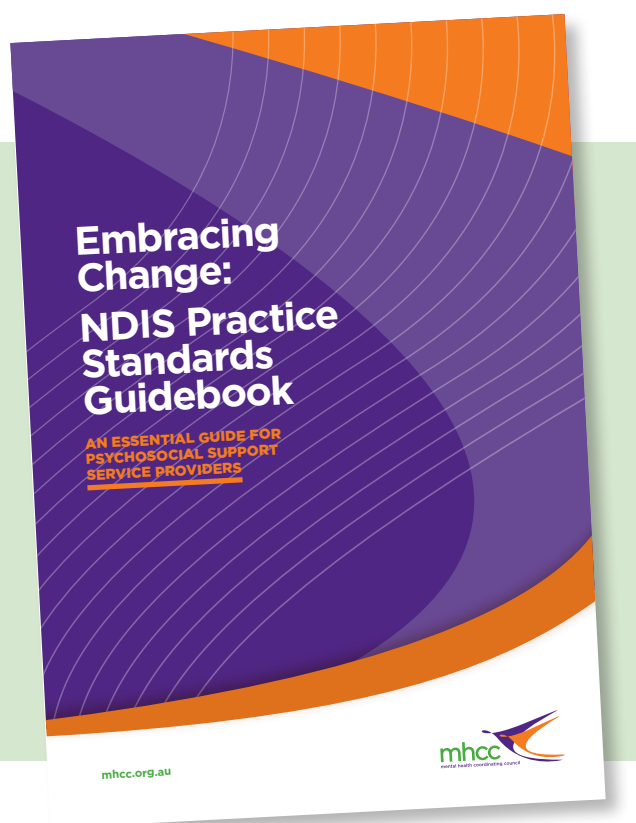
**100%** of respondents rated the quality of training delivered as excellent or good



**100%** of respondents rated courses as excellent or good at providing relevant training on workforce needs for the CMO sector

# SUPPORTING PSYCHOSOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS THROUGH EMBRACING CHANGE STAGE 2

The Embracing Change project set out to support the transition of NDIS registered psychosocial support service providers towards meeting the requirements set out in the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (the NDIS Act) and the *NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standard) Rules 2018*.



Stage 2 of the project developed and delivered online resources which aim to further support capacity building for NDIS registered psychosocial disability service providers.

These resources aim to improve an organisation's overall quality management approach to delivering services, and meeting the requirements set out in the Practice Standards by the NDIS Commission.

This was an incredibly important task undertaken by MHCC as we know that the promotion and delivery of high-quality services is an important safeguard against the risk of significant harm of people living with disabilities.

MHCC co-developed the Stage 2 resources with Breaking New Ground and co-authored the published resources with the Western Australian Association for Mental Health, the sister peak body for community-managed mental health organisations in WA.

The resources developed and launched in August 2022 were an interactive online Self-Assessment tool for the NDIS Practice Standards and a downloadable PDF Guidebook to better understand the NDIS Practice Standards.

It is our hope that these resources will enable NDIS providers of psychosocial support services to achieve greater consistency in service delivery practice and encourage capacity building that aligns with the Practice Standards.

Providing NDIS participants with quality supports and services in a safe and competent environment with care and skill is an important obligation for all NDIS providers and is fundamental to the rights of people with living disability.

Coordinator of the project, Katy Sam was invited to present the project to delegates at the CMHA 4th National NDIS & Mental Health Conference in February 2023.

**The Embracing Change resource is available on our website.**

# NEW RESOURCE DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT DIGITAL SERVICE DELIVERY

The unprecedented circumstances of a global pandemic led to a rapid uptake in technology and an increase in virtual modes of care and support, including in the mental health sector.

To support best practice in the digital delivery of mental health services in the community sector, Mental Health Coordinating Council launched the Digital Service Delivery Guide in 2022.

MHCC's Digital Service Delivery Guide provides best practice guidance on delivering mental health and psychosocial support services and identifies the issues and challenges of delivering digital mental health services in a community-based setting.

Developed for leaders, managers and teams who deliver mental health and psychosocial support services in community-based organisations, the Guide is designed to keep people at the centre of safe, ethical and effective service delivery.

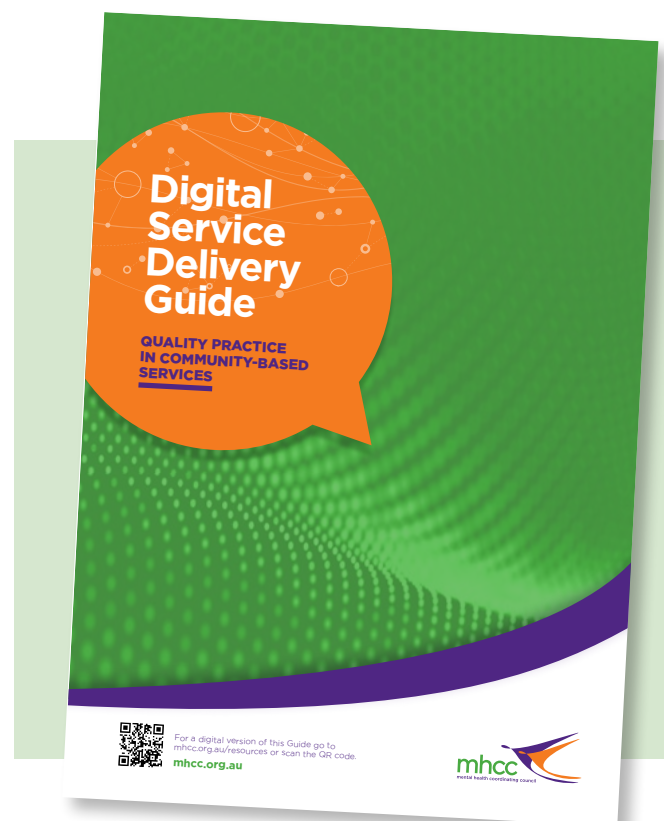
The Guide helps:

- > Navigate the ethical issues and challenges that arise with digital service delivery
- > Consider the policies, procedures and workforce supports needed
- > Assess best practice in virtual modes of service delivery using checklists and tip-sheets provided.

The Digital Service Delivery Guide is free to download from the MHCC website. It can be viewed in sections or downloaded in full.

MHCC launched the Guide at a well-attended webinar in September 2022. Promotion of the Guide included a sector email, social media and regular updates in our FYI e-newsletter.

We hope the Guide helps workers and organisations provide safe, ethical and effective service delivery to those they work to support in a digital context.



**Find the Digital Service Delivery Guide  
on our website.**



# MEET YOUR NEIGHBOUR GROWS IN POPULARITY

MHCC's initiative Meet your Neighbour continues to be a popular means of connecting the mental health sector.

The events serve as an opportunity for frontline workers to address local issues, collectively problem-solve, share and collaborate.

MHCC hosted four Meet your Neighbour events across Sydney and regional NSW in 2022-2023, including Northern Sydney, the Hawkesbury, Inner West and Wollongong. These attracted over 160 participants and linked up more than 60 organisations.

Each event is co-hosted with local partner member organisations and Local Health Districts, who collaborate on establishing a theme for the event through a topic that was relevant to the local area.

Local subject experts updated participants on the chosen topic and engaged in discussion with the group deepening expertise and understanding.

Themes throughout this period included developments in the peer workforce, ways to better support young people, wellbeing in mental health workplaces and the overlapping stigma and discrimination of mental health and substance use.

Feedback from the events is consistently positive, with member organisations proactively reaching out to secure co-hosting opportunities with us.

With a wide variety of organisations and individuals attending, Meet your Neighbour allows us to draw insights for our work from many different corners of the mental health sector.

Thank you to all our co-hosts and participants who have made the events so successful over the last year.

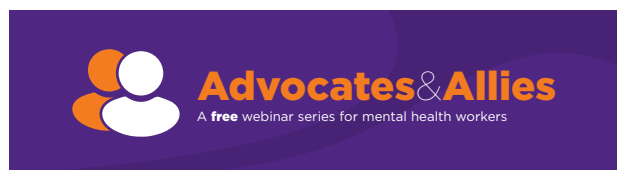






# EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO NAVIGATE SYSTEM COMPLEXITY

Our sector-leading webinar series Advocates & Allies continues to grow in popularity.



The high engagement of audience members during each webinar as well as positive feedback post-event, confirms the desire mental health professionals have to connect with one another and access resources to assist in navigating a broad and complex service system.

Our most popular Advocates & Allies webinar during 2022-2023 focused on homelessness, housing supports and mental health. Over 400 people registered to hear from Trina Jones, then CEO of Homelessness NSW, Shane Jakupiec, Senior Operations Manager at Neami National and John Mason, a lived experience speaker who generously shared his story and experiences.

Other popular topics Advocates & Allies covered surrounded the work being done to maximise human rights for people living with mental health conditions in NSW. This included supporting older people and providing digital and hybrid service delivery models in a changing environment.

MHCC looks forward to continuing to develop and expand this popular initiative by exploring topics with sector leaders and our members to identify topics of interest that can assist them in building sector capacity and skills.

**Catch up on all our webinars on our Advocates & Allies page.**



# OUT AND ABOUT IN THE SECTOR



Carmel Tebbutt, Sharon Friel and Justin Carr (GROW)



MHCC training



Corinne Henderson at the Gidget Workforce Graduation Night



Carmel Tebbutt and Peter Gianfrancesco (formerly Neami National) at Head to Health Penrith



# Culture & Effectiveness

We are a dynamic peak body with robust governance, financial sustainability, active membership and engaged staff.



# INSIGHTS FROM THE 2022 MHCC MEMBER SURVEY

As part of our ongoing commitment to deliver as a leading peak body for the community-managed mental health sector, MHCC conducts an annual Member Representative Survey to gather insights and invaluable feedback on our work.

Results from the 2022 Member Representative Survey demonstrated once again that Members support the work and direction of MHCC.

There was strong endorsement for the work we do in representing the sector, with a significant number of Members strongly agreeing MHCC remains a respected peak body for the community-managed mental health sector.

Members also expressed their satisfaction with the high quality of our communications, training and engagement activities. Our well-regarded weekly FYI e-newsletter received a 90% excellent or good rating.

More than half of respondents rated MHCC highly for offering training that meets the needs of their organisation and workforce.

Of note, 86% of respondents endorsed the support MHCC offered Members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the survey, Members had the opportunity to highlight their most pressing concerns. The top three challenges identified were:

## 1. Funding and inadequate indexation

A substantial 72% of our Membership identified funding and insufficient indexation to cover salary growth as a top concern.

## 2. Demand exceeding available resources

A significant 60% of respondents agreed that the sector faces challenges related to demand outpacing available resources.

## 3. Workforce issues

Workforce-related challenges were also acknowledged by 58% of our Membership.

Thank you to our dedicated Members for their continued trust and partnership in our shared goals and vision. Thanks also to everyone who took time to complete our Member Survey.



**88%** agree MHCC is a respected peak body for the community-managed mental health sector.



**85%** believe MHCC keeps members well informed about relevant issues and the broader sector.



**81%** said MHCC engages with decision makers and is a strong voice for community managed mental health organisations.



**81%** agree MHCC builds the capacity of the sector through supporting the development of a skilled and sustainable workforce.

## Our Members: a snapshot

### MHCC member organisations by workforce

<b>43%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>26%</b>
1-20 FTE	21 - 100 FTE	100+ FTE

### Members offering NDIS services

**67%** non registered NDIS providers  
**33%** registered NDIS providers

### Top three services provided

1. Counselling, support, information & referral
2. Group support activities
3. Information, advocacy & promotion



# OUR TEAM

Thank you to the entire MHCC team for their hard work and dedication. Together with our members, we are shaping the future of community mental health for all people in NSW.

## Chief Executive Officer

**Carmel Tebbutt**

**Dr Evelyne Tadros**

- 13 June 2023

## Policy

**Corinne Henderson**

Principal Policy Advisor

**Katy Sam**

Project Coordinator

## Communications

**Lara Cole**

Communications and Advocacy Manager

**Julia Ni**

Communications and Content Officer  
(Maternity Leave)

**Kate Smytheman**

Communications and Engagement Officer

**Yoshe Foy**

Communications Officer

## Administration & Finance

**Amy McGee**

Administration Manager

**Neuda Spencer**

Administration and Finance Officer

**Roslyn Bowes**

Finance Officer

## Learning & Development

**Michelle Hoomans**

Learning and Development Manager

**Yvette Segal**

Industrial Designer: VET Specialist

**Catriona Broad**

Projects Officer: Student Support

**Rebecca Lewis**

Projects Officer: Student Support

**Maheen**

Training Logistics Coordinator

**Johanna Kain**

Trainer and Assessor

We would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions of our previous team members: Emma Paino, Mary Mizo, Deepshika Dutt, Sara Wood, Helene Orr, Shane Gatley, Lisa Van Praag, Mitchell Bennett, Ben Brian, Jessica Atterton, Chris Wilson, Joshua Foster, Karen Snaidero, Matthew Talary, Ian Morehead, Jacqui Jones and Alison Bell.



## Team wellbeing program

In the spirit of recognising and appreciating the commitment and hard work demonstrated by our dedicated team, MHCC introduced three significant wellbeing initiatives in the past year. These initiatives have been designed to bolster the mental health and overall wellbeing of our team.

### PAID WELLBEING DAYS

Team members are now able to take a paid wellbeing day every quarter to assist in reducing potential burnout and to provide the flexibility to focus on wellbeing without compromising personal or annual leave.

### WELLBEING ROOM

Thanks to the efforts of the administration team, we now have a refreshed wellbeing room that all can access when needed. The room offers wellness equipment, soothing decor and a peaceful space to help people centre themselves during busy workdays.



### RELAX AND RECHARGE

Following a reprieve during the COVID-19 pandemic, massages have been reintroduced for team members. Every two months staff are provided with the opportunity to enjoy a 15-minute sitting massage within the office by a trained practitioner. The massage times allow our team a short period to relax and reflect.

# MEMBERSHIP PROCESS RENEWAL

The 2022-2023 year saw a robust collaborative effort between Mental Health Coordinating Council's administration and communications teams to streamline membership processes and elevate overall experience for our members.

Meeting fortnightly, the Membership Team handles ongoing assessments of the user experience and the implementation of changes, ensuring a clear, concise onboarding of new members and a smoother annual renewal process for existing members.

## Refining the membership journey

Change was needed in the membership process to provide a straightforward experience for new and existing members, while also improving the cross-team effort to monitor KPIs and member satisfaction outcomes.

Significant strides were made to maximise the use of existing systems, ensure integrity of data and integrate backend processes to better align with our evolving membership requirements. This allowed for the implementation of the following improvements:

- > Full digital member record keeping
- > Online member sign-up processes
- > Streamlined member renewal processes
- > Online credit card payments.





Mental Health Coordinating Council

# Financials

Financial statements from Mental Health Coordinating Council  
for the year ending 30 June 2023.

## Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Revenue	4	2,748,097	2,665,552
Employee benefits expenses		(1,659,330)	(1,653,056)
Depreciation and amortisation		(24,559)	(15,988)
Motor vehicle expenses		(2,030)	(2,408)
Program activity expenses		(694,044)	(696,480)
Other operating expenses		(216,531)	(150,092)
Computer and IT expenses		(89,639)	(111,745)
Travel expenses		(15,517)	(10,098)
Income tax expense		-	-
<b>SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>46,447</b>	<b>25,685</b>
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>46,447</b>	<b>25,685</b>

## Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash and cash equivalents	5	3,630,323	3,856,993
Trade and other receivables	6	93,230	24,084
Other assets	8	-	8,897
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>3,723,553</b>	<b>3,889,974</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	7	74,235	63,910
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>74,235</b>	<b>63,910</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>3,797,788</b>	<b>3,953,884</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	9	115,232	127,694
Employee benefits	11	126,178	196,082
Other financial liabilities	10	604,800	718,062
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>846,210</b>	<b>1,041,838</b>
<b>Non-Current Liabilities</b>			
Employee benefits	11	19,825	26,861
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>19,825</b>	<b>26,861</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>866,035</b>	<b>1,068,699</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>2,931,753</b>	<b>2,885,185</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained earnings		2,885,306	2,859,500
Surplus for the year	46,447	25,685	
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>2,931,753</b>	<b>2,885,185</b>

## Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Retained Earnings \$	Total Equity \$
<b>2023</b>		
Balance at 1 July 2021	2,885,185	2,885,185
Total comprehensive income	46,447	46,447
Prior year adjustments	121	121
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2023</b>	<b>2,931,753</b>	<b>2,931,753</b>
<b>2022</b>		
Balance at 1 July 2021	2,859,500	2,859,500
Total comprehensive income	25,685	25,685
<b>BALANCE AT 30 JUNE 2022</b>	<b>2,885,185</b>	<b>2,885,185</b>

## Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Grants operating received		1,212,152	1,381,590
Grant administration fees		429,030	430,649
Contributions received from members		71,175	73,133
LDU course and project income		951,140	727,193
Interest received		18,330	4,988
Other receipts		66,270	45,134
Payments to Suppliers and employees		(2,939,883)	(3,163,449)
<b>NET CASH PROVIDED BY/(USED IN) OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>(191,786)</b>	<b>(500,762)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>			
Payment for property, plant & equipment		(34,884)	(56,544)
<b>NET CASH PROVIDED BY/(USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>(34,884)</b>	<b>(56,544)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<b>NET CASH PROVIDED BY/(USED IN) FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>OTHER ACTIVITIES</b>			
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents held		(226,670)	(554,441)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		3,856,993	4,411,434
<b>CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3,630,323</b>	<b>3,856,993</b>









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