



MEDIA RELEASE

15 June 2023

Mental Illness Fellowship Australia proudly hosts Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health Lunch at Australian Parliament House to highlight the importance of psychosocial supports.

Members of the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) network, federal politicians, people with lived experience, MIFA's sector partners and sponsors gathered today at Australian Parliament House over lunch to hear from guest speakers about the power of psychosocial supports in mental health recovery. More than 20 Members of Parliament, Senators and their advisors attended this awareness raising event to hear directly from speakers with lived experience of mental health challenges and from academics about the latest research on how psychosocial supports are improving people's lives for good.

Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health is a vital partnership of elected members and senators, which focuses on the needs and interests of people affected by mental illness. We were thrilled to work once again with the three Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health Convenors of this 47th Parliament, Tracey Roberts MP, Andrew Wallace MP and Senator Jordon Steele-John. All three convenors are passionate about elevating mental health awareness amongst their colleagues and shedding light on system reforms that are needed to support the mental health and wellbeing of Australians.

Chair of MIFA, Claire Moore, was delighted to welcome parliamentarians from the major political parties, as well as independents, to hear from speakers about the difference psychosocial supports in the community make in supporting mental health recovery. As MC of the lunch, National Chief Executive Officer of MIFA, Tony Stevenson, reiterated the importance of Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health in raising awareness amongst our federal politicians of the challenges that arise for people living with severe and complex mental illness, and of the need for mental health reforms to address service gaps and improve current systems.

We were thrilled to be joined by the Hon Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, who spoke about the importance of community psychosocial support services.

Following the Assistant Minister's speech, three special guest speakers spoke about their insights on psychosocial supports. Hayley Harris shared how receiving community mental health supports and engaging in therapy helped her find her life's purpose and recover from debilitating distress as a young

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adult. Hayley is a passionate trainer, facilitator and advisor from Perth, Western Australia, who uses her experience of mental health challenges in every aspect of her work at Mental Illness Fellowship of Western Australia, and as a Board Member of Consumers of Mental Health Western Australia.

Dr Debbie Hamilton, lived experience advocate and academic from The University of Sydney and Psychosis Australia, shared her experience of how receiving psychosocial supports under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) changed her life. Dr Hamilton painted a stark picture of what can happen when loved ones don't get the support they need in their local community. By contrast, Dr Hamilton spoke about what can happen for the lucky ones who gain access to the NDIS and benefit from psychosocial supports to help build confidence, manage their mental health challenges, and achieve their life goals and passions. For those without an NDIS package, the support options are slim and sometimes non-existent.

Lastly, Professor Jen Smith-Merry, Director of the Centre for Disability Research and Policy from The University of Sydney, presented the latest research on psychosocial supports. Professor Smith-Merry spoke to the important role that community mental health services play in helping people to live well and thrive in their community. Professor Smith-Merry emphasised the need for additional investment in psychosocial support programs across Australia to ensure people living with severe and complex mental health conditions can get the support they need when they need it.

Investing in psychosocial supports for Australians with severe and complex mental illness is critical to supporting mental health and wellbeing. MIFA is advocating for the development and delivery of a national program of psychosocial supports to ensure people can access the supports they need in their local community when they need them.

Mr Stevenson stressed that, "With the right psychosocial support, people with serious and complex mental illness can recover their place in their community, and live contributing lives. We need new investments in psychosocial services to make this happen and we need them now."

"We know that 154,000 Australians living with severe and complex mental illness are missing out on support. We can address this gap with investment in a new national psychosocial support program."

"Every person with severe and complex mental illness has the right to live well and get the support they need to live a good life and thrive as a valued member of their community."

Ends

To get help 24/7, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467. If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, phone 000 for emergency services.

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