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MEDIA RELEASE

PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDS OF MENTAL HEALTH DINNER: ELEVATING MENTAL HEALTH AS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) is honoured to announce the upcoming Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health Dinner, set to take place on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at Australian Parliament House, Canberra. This distinguished event will gather esteemed federal politicians and their advisers, sector partners, sponsors, members of the MIFA network, and leading voices in mental health advocacy to underscore the importance of mental health as a fundamental human right.

Under the theme, "Mental Health - A Human Right", the dinner aims to foster meaningful discussions, share groundbreaking research, and highlight personal stories and insights that illuminate the critical need for comprehensive mental health policies, programs and practices that respect, protect, and fulfill human rights.

The event will feature two eminent speakers who have made significant contributions to the field of mental health, each providing unique insights into the challenges and opportunities in ensuring mental health as a human right for all. Professor Fran Baum AO, Professor at The University of Adelaide and Program Director of Stretton Health Equity, will speak to the importance of social and commercial determinants of mental health, including timely access to high quality health services for people with severe and chronic mental health conditions. Professor Baum will share insights on employment as a social determinant of mental health and suicide, and how government policy can make a difference to people's mental health.

Professor Sharon Lawn, Executive Director of Lived Experience Australia and Professor in Public Health at Flinders University, will share her personal experiences of sharing a life with a loved one with mental health challenges and psychosocial disability, the impacts of unmet needs across the life-course, and the importance of timely access to effective mental health care.

The Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health Dinner is a call to action for politicians, policy makers, government, and mental health advocates to prioritise mental health as a non-negotiable element of human rights. "In a world where mental health issues are increasingly prevalent, recognising and treating mental health with the same urgency and seriousness as physical health is both necessary and a moral imperative," says Mr Tony Stevenson, National Chief Executive Officer of MIFA.



“The 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”, says Mr Stevenson.

“The Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health events provide a platform for federal politicians to hear directly from consumers, carers and friends, as well as service providers and researchers, about the impacts of mental illness on people’s lives, and to hear how they can help to improve the mental health ecosystem for the better.”

MIFA is the host of the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health, working closely with the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health Convenors to plan, coordinate and promote these events to parliamentarians. It has been our great pleasure to work with the current Convenors of the group in recent years and we thank Tracey Roberts MP (Member for Pearce), Andrew Wallace MP (Member for Fisher) and Senator Jordon Steele-John (Senator for Western Australia) for their ongoing support and championing of mental health issues within the Parliament.

MIFA is a leading mental health advocacy organisation dedicated to improving the lives of individuals affected by mental illness through support, education, and advocacy. MIFA collaborates with our member organisations, politicians, policy makers, sponsors and our sector partners to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and promote mental health as a critical component of overall wellness.

This event promises to be a pivotal moment in the ongoing dialogue about mental health as a critical human right, urging collective action towards a more inclusive, equitable, and healthy society for all. Join us in making mental health a priority on the national agenda.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Tuesday 26 March 2024
- **Time:** 6:00pm to 8:30pm AEDT
- **Location:** Australian Parliament House, Canberra.
- **RSVP:** Attendance is by invitation. For more information about this event, please contact Hayley Abell at hayley.abell@mifa.org.au.

Media Contact:

Tony Stevenson, National Chief Executive Officer
M: 0400 555 433
E: tony.stevenson@mifa.org.au