



WINTER 2020

mind View

Safe, supported, connected



Maintaining support and keeping clients and staff safe and well during the pandemic.

Whether it's a farmer in outback Queensland for whom people are too far away, or a woman in Melbourne who finds people can be all too close, Mind's mobile outreach support teams are tailoring the support people need to strengthen their mental health and build a better, more connected life in the community.

Mind has been working with a range of clinical partners delivering psychosocial support where and how it is needed. We have been contracted to deliver support services by hospital services in metropolitan and country Victoria as part of a program

called Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR).

We are thrilled to be providing a similar service through the Individual Recovery Support Program (IRSP) in Cairns and Mackay in Queensland – and a group support program there, which you can read about on page 9.

Mind is implementing the technology to make our support teams mobile and adaptable so they can go to people where help is needed, covering large geographical areas.

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Dear friend,



These are extraordinary times for us all. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Australia, this issue of *Mind View* was in the final stages of preparation. Its theme was 'Connected in the community' – a look at the different ways we help people with mental health conditions to build their connection to their local community.

This edition may be a little late because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I'm delighted to say that its theme is still 'Connected in the community'.

This is because the dedication – and in some cases ingenuity – of our staff has ensured that we can still share with you the programs and support relationships we prepared for this issue before COVID-19. These have continued throughout the restrictions, albeit in different forms.

When COVID-19 reached Australia, the physical distancing restrictions required us to close our Mind centres and deliver their programs through virtual platforms, where possible. We had to change our outreach services to phone or video outreach, with in-person outreach (using physical distancing) in reserve for our most vulnerable and isolated clients.

Our Information Services team performed an extraordinary transformation of the way the entire organisation works and delivers services to clients. This was achieved in days rather than weeks and we cannot thank them enough.

The commitment of our frontline residential and outreach staff in keeping clients safe and supported has been fantastic. They and our many clinical partners and funding agencies have worked as one to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our clients and staff.

Thank you also to our clients, families and carers for following the necessary but challenging physical distancing and visitor restrictions to keep everyone safe during the pandemic. This has truly been a team effort.

Finally, and particularly, our thanks are due to Robyn Hunter who, as CEO, steered Mind through this extraordinarily challenging period with great commitment and fortitude. Robyn leaves Mind after two years of tireless leadership and she will be greatly missed.

Through this period of great change in the sector and at Mind, Robyn's commitment to the clients, families and carers who make up the Mind

community was unfaltering. Robyn has been a binding force in bringing sector organisations together to advocate on shared issues. Her ability to raise the profile of what psychosocial rehabilitation and support is will be a lasting legacy of her time at Mind. We wish Robyn the best of success, health and happiness in her future endeavours.

We are delighted to welcome our new CEO Gill Callister, who joins Mind in mid-July (see p11). In the interim, I and Mind's very capable leadership team shall continue providing excellent service to our customers, developing our staff, growing our business, and ensuring strong process management across all of our operations.

As Australia cautiously navigates the fluctuations of this pandemic, Mind's recovery plan is incorporating everything we have learned through these difficult months to better embrace the changed landscape that lies ahead.

Warm regards,

Jeff Kagan
Acting Chief Executive Officer



The health, safety and wellbeing of our clients and staff is our number one priority.

As you will see from the stories in this edition, how we support people depends on their needs. Sometimes it is very practical support like helping farmer Phil get his driver's licence reinstated and sometimes it is slowly building someone's confidence, like Lavender, to feel safe enough to start to step out into the world beyond her front door.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Australia, we had to change how we deliver many of these services. Mind had an obligation to take measures to minimise infection transmission to protect its clients and we are proud that we responded in a timely and considered fashion.

For the majority of our outreach clients this meant pausing our in-person visits and moving to telephone and virtual support. Just as they had in the bushfires earlier this year, our support staff did a magnificent job ensuring their clients were safe and working with each individually to find the best way to maintain the support and connection they need.

Social isolation is a major issue for many of our outreach clients so Mind undertook vulnerability mapping to ensure that at risk clients were identified and are closely monitored to ensure they are safe and have the necessary support and connection.

As the different states and territories cautiously begin to roll back their restrictions, Mind is returning to in-person support when and where it is approved and safe to do so. The health, safety and wellbeing of our clients and staff is our number one priority.

Mind staff worked with each client to find the best way to maintain the support and connection they need.

For information about how and when we are easing restrictions in different services and states, visit the COVID information page on the home page at mindaustralia.org.au ■



Lavender is blossoming

For a long time, one of Lavender's biggest goals was to join the gym. Even though she wanted to go for walks and participate in the community, Lavender felt extreme anxiety about leaving the home. Lavender (name changed at her request) says she was constantly distressed about her mental health and her prescribed medications.

When St Vincent's Health contracted Mind to deliver its Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response program (EIPSR) last year, we were able to offer Lavender psychosocial support to help her do things outside. Lavender had never accessed psychosocial support before and she was reluctant to meet or engage with a Mind support worker. Her case manager spent several weeks encouraging Lavender to meet with someone from Mind, and eventually, a short meeting was agreed upon.

Initially, Lavender was reluctant to say much and the first meetings with her Mind practitioner, Jessica, were short; Lavender didn't say much because she found it all overwhelming. Several monthly meetings passed and Lavender eventually got to know Jessica; she revealed more about her difficulties conversing with others, how she would often over-think and rehearse what she would say days before a planned meeting. This would lead to overwhelming anxiety, so she tended to avoid and cancel any planned engagements.

Some months later, Lavender is enjoying her time with Jessica and they meet for four

hours once a week. Being able to spend time with a person outside of her family on a regular basis has meant Lavender can practice conversing with others. This has led to a positive change in her self-confidence and she has started achieving some of the goals she had identified with Jessica, including going to the gym. Lavender says she's also keen to be a part of Mind recreational groups, especially an arts and crafts group.

"Mind's support has been life changing," Lavender says. "Can you believe that I am going to the gym now? I was staying at home and had issues, but now I feel new and different; it has really helped my anxiety." ■

For enquiries about early intervention psychosocial supports, contact **Mind Connect on 1300 286 463** or email mindconnect@mindaustralia.org.au.

Update: Supporting Lavender during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 restrictions, Lavender has been supported through regular over-the-phone catch ups with her support worker. These phone calls included health and wellbeing checks, making sure Lavender had enough food and medical supplies as well as general conversation, which maintained that important social connection.

Just before the border restrictions came into place, Lavender had the opportunity to travel to Queensland and spent time strengthening her relationship with her aunt and uncle. While there Lavender also made progress with her diet, eating three meals per day. Starting the day with breakfast was a new and healthy change for Lavender and it helped give her routine and structure during the lockdown period.

The restrictions put a temporary stop to Lavender's trips to the gym, but in the meantime she has been still been able to get out of the house to go for regular walks and get some exercise, something she couldn't have done a few months earlier. Well done, Lavender!



Building skills for independent living

The program that supports Lavender is helping many other people to build their skills to live independently and safely in the community. Through our partnerships with Victorian hospitals, people with severe mental ill-health and associated functional impairment receive an individualised program of recovery to help them live a full and meaningful life.

Participants, who are not currently on the NDIS or are having trouble accessing the scheme, are referred by the clinical treatment team at their health service to this program, called the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR). Through this 12 month program, we help people find and maintain suitable housing, build resilience and coping skills, prepare to return to work or study, improve their relationships, and have fun and connect with other people.

“Our teams across Victoria consist of people from different cultural backgrounds, educational qualifications, and lived experience perspectives,” Mind’s Service Manager Sally Kyriakopoulos, explains.

“Staff are qualified occupational therapists, counsellors and psychologists, and have worked in a range of settings including NDIS, homelessness, alcohol and other drugs and mental health. Every team member is individual in their engagement and approach to working with people and we encourage them to find their own style to best support the client.”

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Often people with mental ill-health can’t access the supports they need to get better because they live too far away, can’t access transport or they can’t motivate themselves to reach out. Mind has provided its teams with the resources to operate as a mobile workforce so they can provide support in these situations.

These services, funded through the hospital and healthcare networks as part of the EIPSR program provide a multi-skilled team who help people improve their daily living skills in the comfort of a familiar environment where they feel safe and secure. Whether it’s learning to cook dinner, do a load of washing or how to clean the bathroom properly, clients build skills and explore ideas for personal growth. They are also supported to connect with and become an active member of their broader community. ■



Hard work, not a miracle

Farmers have been doing it tough in Australia and the impact on their mental health has been profound, as the suicide statistics show.

For Queensland farmer, Phil, breaking point came eight months after he and his wife separated and he found himself alone on the farm and deeply depressed about the separation.

With no-one to talk to, one day last July Phil did something that would be a turning point in his life.

Phil's suicide attempt, with a shotgun he used on the farm, put him in a coma for six weeks and he was in hospital with major head injuries for three months.

"It was something I did on impulse," Phil says. "It wasn't well thought out and not at all planned. I am extremely lucky to have survived."

Phil has had a remarkable physical recovery, though he now has blurred vision in one eye and "I'll always have some trouble swallowing," he says. Restoring his mental health, rebuilding relationships and moving on with his life is a whole other challenge.

As his clinical team from Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service coordinated his recovery, Phil was fortunate they had the option of including a new service in his recovery plan – the Individual Recovery Support Program (IRSP).

To a health professional, this is a twelve-month recovery-focused, community-based outreach support service for adults who are recovering from serious mental illness. To Phil, it is simply Olivia.

Olivia is a Mind remote outreach support worker based in Innisfail/Tully, a few hours south of Cairns. Olivia drives out to Phil's farm twice a week and supports him to get his life in a positive and sustainable frame.

Sometimes that is the practical stuff, like doing the weekly shopping, taking Phil to medical appointments or helping him apply to get his driving licence restored (Phil's licence was suspended as a result of his head injuries).

Other times it is conversations over a cuppa or walking along nearby Mission Beach that can be catalysts in the process of rebuilding Phil's mental health and a vision for the future.

"Phil has always been in work, so not working during his recovery was very challenging for him," says Olivia's Manager, Toni Hines. "He was suddenly spending a lot of time sitting at home and so helping him keep a positive mindset was a big part of Olivia's focus and getting him out and about was important too."

Throughout recovery Phil has been confident of returning to work but Olivia has also supported him to consider the difficult possibility of not getting his licence back and what a Plan B might be if that happens.

Phil has had a remarkable physical recovery, but restoring his mental health is a whole other challenge.

“When we discuss things, I get him to have a look at other solutions,” Olivia says. “If something is carved in stone for Phil, I will challenge his thinking and how that would look in the real world. Then perhaps we can consider another solution.”

Both Phil and Olivia recognise the trauma of what happened is still very raw but Phil is making plans that will help his recovery.

“I want to move away from Tully and make a fresh start away from the farm and all the old memories,” he says. “I’m thinking I’ll move house and get a job down in the Burdekin area and I want to go back to farming again.”



Asked what he would like to tell people who read his story, Phil says, “I don’t want people to think of my recovery as a miracle. It’s a lot of hard work and constant self-monitoring.”

Having the right support makes it possible. It’s early days, but Phil says his work with Olivia is already making a difference. “I’m thinking about things differently to what I did before. Things were more negative

before than they are now; I’m in a much better place.” ■

For information about the Individual Recovery Support Program in Cairns and Mackay regions contact Mind Connect on 1300 286 463.

If this article has raised issues for you and you need support, call Lifeline 13 11 14 or MensLine Australia 1300 789 978.



Update: Supporting Phil during COVID-19

“The funny thing about the COVID-19 restrictions is that Phil and I had already moved to phone support before it happened,” Olivia told Mind View when we checked in with her for an update recently.

“The huge thing that happened is he got his licence back, which has been fantastic for him. He got a job on a farm, which was a big goal of his.”

It was a lot of driving (from the farm to meet Olivia in person) so Phil asked Olivia if they could switch to phone support.

“Phil has soldiered on and had a lot of positive life changes since you interviewed us. He is so excited to be back working on a farm again and it sounds like his employer has been a big support for him also,” Olivia says.

“But he also recognises he still needs support. We now catch up by phone twice a week and he calls or texts if there is anything else he needs to talk about. And that’s working really well.”



Keeping the learning alive



“We can’t undo all this good work with clients and let it go to waste.”

When the COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions meant putting the Mackay Mind centre’s group activities on hold, Mind peer practitioner Kristie Bell was determined to find a way to keep them going.

“It all happened so quickly,” Kristie says. “Suddenly we just had to put these groups we’d built up since we opened last year on hold. I thought we can’t undo all this good work with clients and let it go to waste.”

Kristie had been facilitating Mind Recovery College™ courses three times a week for groups of about five people.

“We had a six-week course learning about anxiety and managing the symptoms, a course in confidence building and one in assertiveness skills.”



Kristie Bell

Kristie immediately started playing around with the course material and quickly turned it into a work-from-home program so clients could still do courses without coming to the centre.

“I emailed clients the lesson on the day they would have had a class and over time it evolved to become easier to read and with new ideas.”

I’d offer a one-on-one phone conversation with each participant to help them work on each lesson or they could text or email any questions. Sometimes people had motivation issues being at home, so that regular contact and the check-ins really helped keep them motivated.”

To Kristie’s surprise the courses became more popular than ever and the groups grew in size as a result.

“The beauty of it was that people who have social anxiety issues were able to participate in the course so we actually had an increase in participation by about double.”

“We have some regulars who sign up for everything and keep attending, which is great for their recovery as they not only learn

valuable life skills but really build their social skills. But other clients can find it difficult to come. They are really keen to do it but, when it comes the time, they can’t quite do it.”

Kristie says distance was also an issue for clients.

“Mackay is very spread out so a suburb can be 45 minutes away and the travel can be difficult – it can be hard for clients to come in for that first course experience.”

“Offering the courses by remote learning has given those people who weren’t able to come in and do it a taste of what we do,” Kristie says. “That means we get to build a relationship with people and they feel more comfortable about coming in and doing it in person. And even if they don’t, they still have the option now of doing it at home.”

“I worked with our Mind Learning and Development consultant and she is keen to keep the remote courses going as an alternative for those who can’t come in and as a means of getting people comfortable with it. We will still encourage people to come in face to face for groups for the social benefits of that but it has been a really positive and unexpected development for us and our clients.” ■

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In brief

Mind welcomes our new CEO

Mind is delighted to announce the appointment of Gill Callister as the new Chief Executive Officer of Mind.

Gill brings a wealth of leadership experience to the role, following an exceptional career in the Victorian Public Service, most notably as Secretary of the Department of Education and Training (2015 - 2018) and Department of Human Services (2009 - 2014).

Gill began her career as a social worker and spent ten years working in child protection and family services in non-government organisations including OzChild.

Most recently, Gill was an Associate Dean at the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and was a 2019 Victorian Public Service Medal recipient. Gill is also an Adjunct Professor (Practice) in Politics at Monash University and a member of the Monash University Council.

Gill has extensive experience in human services environments, managing large and complex service delivery systems that are client centric, strongly evidence based and deliver tangible outcomes. Gill begins in the role on 13 July 2020.

“The Board considers Gill an excellent fit for Mind, to lead our staff and stakeholder communities in continuing to support our clients and build sustainable services to help more

people gain better mental health and a better quality of life,” Mind Board Director Melissa Field said.

Mind thanks our Director of Organisation Performance, Jeff Kagan, who has served as Acting Chief Executive Officer in the interim. We have been delighted to have someone of his calibre within our team to be able to step into the role.



Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on carers

The COVID-19 pandemic has created greater challenges for many of Australia's unpaid carers, a national survey has found. Conducted by the Caring Fairly campaign, which is coordinated by Mind, the survey drew on 471 responses.

Almost half of the carers surveyed reported having to take on more care responsibilities since the outbreak with 50 per cent now spending over 46 hours each week on care. Many carers also reported losing regular income due to the pandemic with a number of carers having to reduce or give up paid work due to their increasing care responsibilities, or because their employers no longer had work for them.

A large majority of carers (81%) said their mental health had deteriorated since COVID-19 and almost all carers (88%) said

they were now experiencing more stress in the role as a carer.

These results are crucial for raising awareness on the impact of the outbreak on carers and will provide powerful evidence to support Caring Fairly's advocacy to

government around carers' needs and rights during COVID-19 and beyond.

To read the summary survey results, learn more about or join the Caring Fairly campaign visit caringfairly.org.au



Mind launches new tool to track recovery



This winter Mind is rolling out a new digital tool we have developed that will enable our residential clients to track their recovery progress with their support workers. *Getting Better Together* is an easy to use digital survey that clients complete at the beginning and completion of a period of care – or every six months in long-term residential support settings. By providing responses to a few key questions, clients will build periodic records over time of their mental health and wellbeing and their progress towards achieving their goals.

This will not only assist residents in following their progress and celebrating their achievements, the tool's collective data will also provide Mind with the evidence base to identify where programs can be improved. The tool has been developed as a collaboration between Mind's Research and Advocacy division and Mind's Digital Transformation team.



Heather McIntyre

New Mind funded PhD scholarship explores public health and disability

Mind is funding a PhD scholarship in partnership with the University of South Australia. Under the supervision of Professor Nicholas Procter, Dr Mark Loughhead and Dr Elise Davis, PhD candidate Heather McIntyre is exploring how emergency departments respond to consumers and carers with a psychosocial disability who are also receiving support through the NDIS. We welcome Heather on board and look forward to seeing her research progress.

Let the games continue!

When Mind peer educator Chris Blums began tailoring the fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons as a way to stimulate safe conversations about mental wellbeing with clients at the Mind Williamstown day centre, Amaroo, the Dungeons and Dragons Guild quickly became one of the most popular activities groups there.

When the centre had to temporarily close because of COVID-19 restrictions, Chris soon had the group up and running online with

participants connecting from home via video and playing on a tabletop simulator. The group quickly became as active and popular as ever, playing Dungeons & Dragons and other video games together. Keeping the group together and staying connected has been more important than ever while the restrictions have been in place.

"Clients miss being in the space with people, but are loving have the groups delivered into their homes, especially now," Amaroo's Service Manager Tom Whiting says.





Live your way!

With the support you need to live life to the fullest.

Mind provides high quality supported accommodation services, including NDIS-funded supported independent living to help people achieve a better life.

Our qualified staff are skilled at working in partnership with residents in shared housing and the important people in their lives; both one-to-one and in group settings.

We help build personal skills and confidence so you can live independently, while fostering a positive sense of community at the residence.

We will work with you to build the life you want and to fulfil your NDIS plan goals.

Short term supported accommodation places also available at some locations.

Call our customer service centre Mind Connect on 1300 286 463 (1300 AT MIND) for a personalised quote.