



MENTAL HEALTH  
**carers  
voice**

*Leading change and action with, and for, mental health Carers*

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**August 1**

**E-Bulletin**

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## ***Mental Health Carers Voice***

### **Forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and friends of people with mental health issues**

Carers ACT is holding a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and friends of people living with mental health issues.

The aims of this forum are to:

- Engage participant discussion on issues or concerns relating to mental health services and supports in the ACT; and
- Introduce carer representatives who are working towards systemic change for families and friends of people living with mental health concerns.

A key outcome of this forum will be a report with suggestions for service improvements.

We look forward to seeing you at the forum that is specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and friends in a caring role of someone living with mental health issues.

**Date:** Wednesday 7 August

**Time:** 12.00 – 3.00pm  
**Location:** Mabo Room, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Lawson Crescent, Acton  
**Cost:** Free. Lunch will be provided  
**RSVP:** COB 5pm Friday 2 August. Phone Emma on 6296 9936 or email [mhcarers@carersact.org.au](mailto:mhcarers@carersact.org.au)

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### Carer Representation Training

The Mental Health Carers Voice program is providing training for carer representatives and for carers who are interested in becoming representatives. Come along and:

- Learn and/or refresh your representative skills
- Meet and connect with other carer representatives
- Engage with ACT Government policy makers and service providers
- Pick up copies of latest policy resources etc.

**Date:** Thursday 29 August  
**Time:** 5.00 – 9.00pm  
**Location:** Carers ACT, 80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt  
A light dinner will be provided.

To register phone Emma on 6296 9952 or email [mhcarers@carersact.org.au](mailto:mhcarers@carersact.org.au)

### New publications available at Carers ACT

The Mental Health Carers Voice program has recently purchased some publications that will be of interest to mental health carers. For example:

- A special issue on psychosocial interventions in schizophrenia in the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry (Volume 47, Number 6, June 2013). We have also purchased other ANZJP issues
- *The Skipping Stone. Ripple Effects of Mental Illness on the Family* by Mona Wasow
- A range of social work articles relating to mental health carers/families by Professor Robert Bland.

These publications will be stored in the Carers ACT library, in the Hub. For more information, contact Doris on 6296 9936. Whilst checking out the library resources you may also wish to visit the Branch Out Café at Carers ACT. The café has extended its hours of operation. Delicious fare, including cake, biscuits, soups and gourmet sandwiches, is available Monday-Friday, 8.30am to 1.00pm.

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## *Carers Corner*

### **Workshop – Creative Approaches to Supporting Recovery by Mary O’Hagan Sydney 17 July 2013**

A carer who was supported by Carers ACT to attend the above workshop, has submitted a report for Carers Corner:

“Around 25 participants attended the workshop, with 24 working in services such as RichmondPRA. The types of support the participants provided ranged from group and individual support, getting people employment ready and outreach in the home.

This report should be considered in the context of my reporting back from the perspective of families and carers. I was the only participant representing families and carers. It was through this lens that I have put together my comments.... Click [here](#) to read the full report.

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### **The invisible carer**

The following article was submitted to Carers Corner:

“I am married to a person with mental illness. Because she is "high functioning", I am an invisible carer - people would never realise that I am in a caring role. It's true that, 90% of the time, my wife appears unaffected by the bipolar disorder which she has lived with for more than half her life. That is the side of her which most people see and the side which causes them to look at me with disbelief if I reach out for support when she is going through a rough patch. But I am a carer” ... Click [here](#) to read the full article.

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### **Viewpoint: 10 jargon phrases used for my autistic son**

This article was submitted by a carer to Carers Corner. The article was published in the United Kingdom and can also be found on the author, Mark Neary’s ‘Love, Belief and Balls blog’. It looks at the power of language and labels:

“My son Steven is 23. He has autism and other learning difficulties. And the language of the social care system seems to make his life sound even less "normal" than it is” ... Click [here](#) to read the full article.

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### The Branch Out Café

Now open 5 days per week 8.30 to 1.00 at 80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt.

The heating is perfect. So come in for morning tea or lunch. Consider the café for catering events.

For more information call 6296 9900 or email [Branchoutcafe@carersact.org.au](mailto:Branchoutcafe@carersact.org.au)

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### August: Day Trip to the Craft and Quilt Fair

Come and enjoy a day at the Craft and Quilt Fair. Tickets will be distributed prior to the event.

Carers are to arrange their own transport to and from the Fair. Tickets can be used on any day of the Fair (once only).

**Date:** Thursday 8 to Sunday 11 August

**Time:** 10.00am – 4.30pm daily

**Location:** Royal Canberra Show, EPIC, Flemington Road, Mitchell

**RSVP:** by Wednesday 31 July to Reception on 6296 9900  
or email [rsvp@carersact.org.au](mailto:rsvp@carersact.org.au)

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### August: Advance Care Planning (ACP) and Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA)

Joy from the Respecting Patient Choices Unit at the Canberra Hospital will present information and assistance to carers to create their own ACP.

**Date:** Wednesday 14 August

**Time:** 10.00am – 12.00pm

**Location:** Carers ACT, 80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt

**RSVP:** Reception 6296 9900 or email [rsvp@carersact.org.au](mailto:rsvp@carersact.org.au)

For suggestions on future topics, please email Marie at [marie.falconer@carersact.org.au](mailto:marie.falconer@carersact.org.au)  
[Click here for the flyer.](#)

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### August: Private Viewing at the National Gallery of Australia

#### Roy Lichtenstein: Pop Remix

This exhibition traces the artist's print projects from the 1950s to the 1990s.

**Date:** Wednesday 28 August

**Time:** 10.30am (Meet at the Main Entrance at 10.15am)

**Location:** The National Gallery of Australia, Parkes

**RSVP:** by Friday 23 August to Reception 6296 9900  
or email [rsvp@carersact.org.au](mailto:rsvp@carersact.org.au)

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### **Mental Health Carers – Southside Support Group**

This is a support group for family members and friends caring for someone living with mental health issues. The group meets on one Wednesday evening most months.

**Date:** Wednesdays 28 August, 25 September, 30 October, 27 November,  
18 December (no groups in January or July)

**Time:** 6.00pm – 8.00pm

**Location:** Woden Smith Family, Corner of Launceston and Easty Streets, Woden

For further information please call 1800 242 636 or email [rsvp@carersact.org.au](mailto:rsvp@carersact.org.au)

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### **Mental Health Carers – Northside Support Group**

This is a support group for family members and friends caring for someone living with mental health issues. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month.

**Date:** Tuesdays 6 August (5:30pm start), 10 September, 8 October,  
12 November, 10 December (no groups in January or July)

**Time:** 5.00pm – 7.00pm

**Location:** Carers ACT, 80 Beaurepaire Crescent, Holt

For further information please call 1800 242 636 or email [rsvp@carersact.org.au](mailto:rsvp@carersact.org.au)

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### **Mental Health Carers Respite — 1800 052 222**

The Mental Health Respite Program provides flexible respite and other supports to meet the individual needs of carers of people with severe mental illness, autism or intellectual disabilities and their families. Services include respite options based on needs assessments, information and referral, links to education programs, counselling, peer support, advocacy services and social and recreational activities. Please call 1800 052 222 or email

[mentalhealth.respite@carersact.org.au](mailto:mentalhealth.respite@carersact.org.au). The Mental Health Respite program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs. For more information about support available under this Program, visit the Carers ACT [website](#).

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### **Counselling at Carers ACT — Supporting Family Carers — 1800 242 636**

Did you know that Carers ACT can provide short-term counselling for family carers? Our counselling service can help you manage difficult situations and balance caring in your life. Qualified counsellors are located on site in Holt and Woden to provide carers with confidential and professional face-to-face and telephone counselling. Call the Carer Advisory Service to make an appointment on 1800 242 636. Click here for more information on [support that Carers ACT counsellors can offer mental health carers](#).

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## ACT News

### CIT Skills for Carers

CIT Skills for Carers has been successfully providing flexible training for family carers in the ACT since 1995. By carers we mean family and friends of a frail older person or a person living with a disability, chronic illness or mental health issues. There are people involved in an unpaid capacity in the many aspects of supporting someone to live as independently as possible. Training is available through short courses, workshops or on an individual basis. There are no fees for this training. Click [here](#) to view courses beginning in the coming months, such as carers managing their own depression, Supporting someone with memory loss and Mindfulness and relaxation, to name a few. For more information please email CIT Skills for Carers Program at [carerskills@cit.edu.au](mailto:carerskills@cit.edu.au) or call on 6207 3628.

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### Volunteering Opportunity – 1 Day Compeer Volunteer Training

Compeer is an award winning volunteer program sponsored by the St Vincent de Paul Society and ACT Health. They are looking for people to offer friendship and social support to people who have become isolated due to a mental illness. They also aim to break down the stigma associated with mental illness. Compeer is focused on matching people diagnosed with a mental illness with a 'buddy' who is a caring and compassionate volunteer. Compeer seeks to address the misconceptions in the community around mental illness that often cause those with mental health problems to become isolated, lonely and depressed. It is based on the simple premise that 'friendship is a powerful medicine'. One steady, reliable and caring companion can make all the difference.

Volunteers specifically needed are friendly compassionate men and women, between the ages of 18 and 75. The initial commitment sought from volunteers is a minimum of 4 hours per month for a 12 month period.

The training is free and the next session will be held next month.

**Date:** Saturday 3 August  
**Time:** 9.00am – 3.00pm  
**Location:** Board Room, St Vincent de Paul Offices, 14-16 Colbee Court, Phillip  
Lunch and refreshments will be provided.  
**RSVP:** Friday 26 July

For further information about the program and to register interest, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Katherine Horak. Phone 6234 7348 or email [volunteer@sudp-cg.org.au](mailto:volunteer@sudp-cg.org.au)

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## Majura Women's Group Exhibition now on

A new photographic exhibition entitled "Women: Celebrating a Century of Canberra's Women" will be on display to 4 August in the foyer of the Belconnen Arts Centre. [Click here](#) to see the flyer/invitation to the opening.

Majura Womens' Group support women and their families. They meet on Wednesday mornings during school terms, 9.30am to 12.30pm, at the Downer Community Centre, Frencham Place, Downer. [Click here](#) to visit their website.

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## Oz Help Foundation Ltd – safeTALK

Oz Help Foundation Ltd are facilitating a safeTALK on Wednesday 7 August.

### WHY SHOULD I COME TO safeTALK?

In only a few hours, you will learn how to provide practical help to persons with thoughts of suicide. Expect to leave safeTALK more willing and able to perform an important helping role for persons with thoughts of suicide.

### HOW DOES safeTALK PREVENT SUICIDE?

safeTALK prepares you to be a suicide alert helper. You are aware that opportunities to help a person with thoughts of suicide are sometimes missed, dismissed and avoided. You want persons with thoughts of suicide to invite your help. You know the TALK steps (Tell, Ask, Listen and KeepSafe) and can activate a suicide alert. As a part of the KeepSafe step, you connect persons with thoughts of suicide to persons trained in suicide intervention. Helpers trained in suicide intervention complete the helping process or connect the person with more specialised help.

### WHY USE safeTALK TO LEARN TO BECOME ALTER?

safeTALK is the result of some 20 years of work by internationally renowned training developed LivingWorks. A carefully crafted set of helping steps and the use of creative educational processes make it possible for you and up to 30 others in your community to leave safeTALK willing and able to be suicide alert helpers.

### WHAT HAPPENS AT safeTALK training?

Expect to be challenged. Expect to have feelings. Expect to be hopeful. See powerful reminders of why it is important to be suicide alert. See how to activate an alert. Ask questions and enter discussions. Learn clear and practical information on what to do. Practice the TALK steps. Conclude with practice in activating a suicide alert.

#### WHY IS safeTALK FOR EVERYONE?

Most persons with thoughts of suicide go unrecognised—even though most are, directly or indirectly, requesting help. Without safeTALK training, these invitations to help are too rarely accepted, or even noticed. With more suicide alert helpers, more people with thoughts of suicide will get connected to the intervention help they want. Suicide alert helpers are part of a suicide-safer community.

To register for this course, visit our web site [www.ozhelp.org.au](http://www.ozhelp.org.au) or phone Tricia Eldridge 6251 4166 or email [ocs@ozhelp.org.au](mailto:ocs@ozhelp.org.au)

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#### Dying to know day

This afternoon tea is a community event. Bring your questions, share experiences and feel empowered to talk about death and dying in a safe space. Come and share a cuppa and a scone, and chat about a topic we will all face. The afternoon tea will run from 2.00 to 3.00pm at Ginninderra Gardens Aged Care Facility, 23 Burkitt Street, Page. This event is supported by Calvary Health Care ACT, Palliative Care ACT and Anglicare.

RSVP 6273 9608 or [office@pallcareact.org.au](mailto:office@pallcareact.org.au) or for more information visit [www.dyingtoknowday.org](http://www.dyingtoknowday.org)

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#### Enhanced Service Offer Grants – Round One Closing Date Reminder

The first round of the Enhanced Service Offer grants **close at 5.00 pm on Friday 9 August 2013.**

Round two will be open from 30 September to 8 November 2013.

Because of the large number of applications to be assessed, late applicants will not be considered unless they are received with a postal mark of Thursday 8 August 2013 or before.

Applications can be made in the following ways:

- online at [www.act.gov.au/enhancedserviceoffer](http://www.act.gov.au/enhancedserviceoffer)  
**please note that the SmartyGrants on line portal will close at exactly 5.00pm on Friday 9 August.**
- paper form – download and complete the form available at [www.act.gov.au/enhancedserviceoffer](http://www.act.gov.au/enhancedserviceoffer)
- by requesting a paper application from the Disability ACT Information Service on 6207



1086 or [DisabilityACT@act.gov.au](mailto:DisabilityACT@act.gov.au)

Please submit paper applications either:

**By post:**

Enhanced Service Offer  
Contracts and Grants Unit  
Community Services Directorate  
GPO Box 158  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

**In person to:**

The concierge  
Ground Floor, Central Access Point  
Housing and Community Services  
Nature Conservation House  
153 Emu Bank  
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## Gender and Grief workshop

Oz Help Community Services are offering a half day workshop on Gender and Grief with Mandy Cox and Sonia Fenwick (Canberra Grief Centre).

The death of someone we love has the ability to throw all that we know into a state of unknown. The individual's experience of this is grief. When two people are grieving for the same loss, their individual experiences may be very different. At times they can feel misunderstood and unheard by each other. How does gender contribute to these differences?

Mandy and Sonia will outline some of the presumptive stereotypes, social and culture expectations often branded and prescribed as "masculine" and "feminine" expressions of grief. Following on, they will introduce a more contemporary perspective which suggests there are styles of grieving considered typical of, but not determined by, gender.

The workshop is aimed at people who provide support to others who are experiencing grief. This could include health and welfare workers, chaplains, counsellors, educational professionals, carers and volunteers.

**Date:** Thursday 15 August

**Time:** 9.15am arrival for 9.30am – 1.00pm

**Location:** OzHelp Foundation Training Suite, Unit 6/41-45 Tennant Street, Fyshwick

**Cost:** \$50.00 per person, including morning tea

For further information please contact Tricia Eldridge, Community Development Project Officer, 6251 4166 or email [ocs@ozhelp.org.au](mailto:ocs@ozhelp.org.au) You can also register on line, [click here](#).

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### Common Ground Canberra Volunteers needed

Common Ground Canberra needs your help in Canberra between 15 to 18 August for a great event. Please read the attached letters, [We need your volunteer help](#) and [Bed Vigil Project Outline](#), to find why the help is needed then contact any of the below people to volunteer:

Eiren Black on 0406 850 559 or email [eirenpmb@gmail.com](mailto:eirenpmb@gmail.com)

Fiona Smith du Toit on 0416 100 804 or email [fionasmithdutoit@gmail.com](mailto:fionasmithdutoit@gmail.com)

Vyt Valkaitis on 0419 600 238 or email [vyt.vilkaitis@afma.gov.au](mailto:vyt.vilkaitis@afma.gov.au)

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### When being angry no longer works – Personal Development course for Women

The Women's Information and Referral Centre are offering a Wednesday mornings course, held over six weeks. This is an interactive and practical course for women who seek to improve their strategies to manage anger and other strong emotions in an effective and a positive way.

Aims of the course include:

- Develop an awareness of the external and internal causes of anger
- Learn to respect and trust your own perceptions and emotions
- Work through past anger and other associated emotions
- Notice emotional triggers and change automatic reactive responses
- Learn to self-soothe effectively and compassionately
- Communicate with confidence and effectively assert yourself
- Explore positive physical, emotional and behavioural solutions for anger
- Use anger effectively to motivate and energise yourself.

**Date:** Wednesdays 14 August to 18 September

**Time:** 9.30am – 12.00pm

**Location:** Women's Information and Referral Centre,  
Ground Floor, London Court, 13 London Circuit, Canberra City

**Cost:** \$80.00 and \$40.00 concession (please discuss with their staff)

For more information or to register your interest, please contact the Women's Information and Referral Centre on 6205 0303 or 6205 1075, email [wirc@act.gov.au](mailto:wirc@act.gov.au) or drop in and visit them at the address above.

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### **Dementia Awareness Week – Open day at The Cottage in Deakin**

As part of Dementia Awareness Week 2013 Alzheimer's Australia ACT, in partnership with Carers ACT, is holding an Open Day at The Cottage in Deakin.

The Cottage is Canberra's premier short-term respite option for carers of people with dementia. The Open Day is an opportunity for people to visit The Cottage and take part in an informative and enjoyable morning of activities.

**Date:** Thursday 26 September  
**Time:** 10.00am – 1.30pm  
**Location:** The Cottage, 117 Denison Street, Deakin  
**Cost:** Free  
**RSVP:** By Thursday 19 September  
Alzheimer's Australia ACT  
Phone: 6255 0722

[Click here](#) to see the flyer.

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## ***National & International News and Research***

### **Commission welcomes release of National Seclusion Data**

The National Mental Health Commission welcomed the public release of national seclusion data by states and territories on 19 July, as well as the commitment to the ongoing national reporting of this data. The public release of seclusion and restraint data by all states and territories – regularly and in a way that allows comparison – is something the Commission called for when it released its first annual National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in November 2012 and it has been pushing for this ever since.

[Click here](#) to see the news release. [Click here](#) to see the report produced by Mental Health Services in Australia. [Click here](#) to see an article from *The Australian* portraying a real case study of seclusion, 'Alone in a living hell'.

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### **Teenage boys at greatest risk of mental health need better online engagement**

New research shows that nearly one young man in five thinks his life isn't worth living. And out of all those surveyed, 42 per cent were experiencing some level of psychological distress.

The report has thrown new light on the need for mental health care providers to engage with young men online and outside normal business hours. It found that the traditional clinical model of care often failed young men, who are more at risk of suicide than any demographic in society.

The report is **Game On – Exploring the Impact of Technologies on Young Men's Mental Health and Wellbeing** has been put together by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre. [Click here](#) to read a report on the study from ABC radio. [Click here](#) to see the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre's article. There are also related articles in our In The Media section of this E-Bulletin.

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### Welcome to advokit–NDIS

A new website has been developed by Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited (DANA) to support advocacy for people with disabilities in connection with DisabilityCare scheme. [Click here](#) for a link to this website.

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### SANE Australia report calls for action to reduce stigma against mental illness

A new study from mental health charity, SANE Australia, reports that stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness is widespread, harmful to recovery, and is a major barrier to participation in society for those affected.

The new report – ***A Life without Stigma*** – concludes that a national strategy to tackle stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness is vital, and should be a non-negotiable component of mental health policies and plans. [Click here](#) to view the media release.

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### *beyondblue* to lead redevelopment of mental health program for secondary schools

*beyondblue* has been appointed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing to lead the redevelopment and delivery of **Mindmatters** through to mid-2016.

Mindmatters is the national mental health initiative for secondary schools. The initiative, which was first implemented in 2000, will be updated to meet the changing mental health needs of Australian school communities. [Click here](#) to view the media release. [Click here](#) to view a related article.

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## The simple things in life keep Aussies happy

Developed by the Black Dog Institute in partnership with Newspoll and *The Australian*, the Black Dog Index is a quarterly measure of national mental health. It calculates levels of happiness and optimism, and identifies rates of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

Key findings from the latest Black Dog Index include:

- The level of happiness amongst Australians is steady at 77 points (out of 100)
- Reduced levels of depression in women and people living in the lowest income bracket
- A small but significant overall increase in people reporting suicidal thoughts and anxiety
- Optimism is still relatively high and unchanged from previous surveys
- Women recorded significantly higher levels of “emotional closeness” compared to men
- Men are significantly more reliant on relationships and employment to maintain happiness

[Click here](#) to view the media release

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## Contributing Life Conversations

The National Mental Health Commission made a commitment last year to ensure that people always have a voice and remain at the centre of decision-making about the services that impact on them. **From Monday 22 July to Sunday 11 August**, the Commission is encouraging people to meet in homes, workplaces, café's, parks and public spaces around Australia to have 'Contributing Life Conversations'.

These conversations are about sharing what *A Contributing Life* means to you and those close to you, and discussing what gives each of our lives meaning and purpose. They are based on four simple questions, designed to take less than an hour.

This initiative is part of the Commissions' *National Contributing Life Project*, and will help build a rounded picture of people's lives and experiences.

[Click here](#) for more information on how you can be part of this initiative. [Click here](#) to see the brochure.

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## Mental Health Services (TheMHS) 2013 Conference

The annual TheMHS Conference will be held in Melbourne, 20–23 August. This year's program will include multiple sessions focusing on:

- Developing the Mental Health Workforce

- Mental Health and the Law
- Mental Health Recovery Services
- The Mental Health Reform Agenda

Details of the program and related conference activities can be found [here](#). To register on line, [click here](#)

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## *In the media*

### Links to current media that may be of interest to carers

- [Young men prone to suicidal thoughts](#)
- [Wake-up call on young men's mental health](#)
- [High profile mental health speaker visits Young](#)
- [Stem the rising tide of mental illness](#)
- [Experts team up to launch International Centre for Mental Health Social Research](#)
- [Prisoners experience a range of health issues, but some improvements reported during incarceration](#)
- [Radical plan to hasten mental health centre](#)
- [Headspace centre opened](#)
- [Youth mental health program to launch next year](#)
- [Farmer health policy a must: Fairleigh](#)
- [Focus on mental health in the wheat belt](#)
- [Rudd's PNG plan could worsen asylum seekers' mental health](#)
- [Blanket exemption ruled out for grandparent carers](#)
- [Guide promotes wellbeing at work](#)
- [Moustache growers help boost mental health](#)

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*If you or someone you know may be at risk of suicide contact Lifeline 131 114, beyondblue 1300 224 636, or Salvo Care Line 1300 363 622.*

*The opinions expressed in this E-Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the opinions and views of Carers ACT.*

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[www.carersvoice.com.au](http://www.carersvoice.com.au)

