

MEDIA RELEASE

15 November 2010

Australian of the Year to headline international mental health conference in Tasmania

AIHW* data tell us that Tasmania has the highest rate of mental health-related residential care beds per 100,000 population in Australia, yet the lowest number of salaried medical officers per 100,000 population.

And with mental health attracting more attention from policy makers than ever before in Australia, Tasmania is poised to benefit enormously from an international mental health conference to be held this week in Hobart.

A highlight of the Richmond Fellowship Asia Pacific Regional Conference will be a keynote presentation from Australian of the Year Professor Patrick McGorry on early intervention and youth mental health.

Professor McGorry will be joined by a range of local, national and international speakers to discuss a range of issues that affect community wellbeing, and to explore long-term approaches to mental health policy.

Richmond Fellowship Tasmania CEO Patrick Carlisle said one in five Australians will experience a mental illness at some stage in their lives, and mental illness will at some point affect 50 per cent of the population as they care for friends and family.

“The mental health picture in Tasmania is of particular concern,” Mr Carlisle said.

“It’s not a good situation, and we are excited to be holding the conference in Hobart. Its location here will clarify some issues in our State, and paint a pathway for Tasmanians’ recovery.

“As a leading provider of mental health services in Tasmania, Richmond Fellowship Tasmania is looking forward to a conference that brings eminent international experts in mental wellbeing to Tasmania to share ideas and to help inform the future service delivery throughout the island.”

Around 250 national and international delegates will be attending the conference, with people travelling from as far away as Scotland, India, Sri Lanka, China and Iran to contribute to discussions.

In addition to Professor McGorry, keynote speakers at the conference include:

- international mental health adviser and consultant Gregor Henderson, who heads the agency charged with delivering mental health policy in England;
- deputy chairman of beyondblue, John McGrath AM speaking on personal and political linkages;
- program director for beyondblue Brian Graetz, speaking on a mental health and wellbeing framework for primary schools; and
- Brisbane-based Helen Glover, who will speak about her own experience of recovery from mental illness.

* *Mental health services in Australia 2005-06*, Australian Institute of Health & Welfare cat. no. HSE56, 2008.



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Other Conference highlights will include:

- Pre-conference workshop on ambiguous loss and its associations with mental illness (ambiguous loss being a situation where it is impossible for families to obtain factual information regarding the loss — established by research to be enormously traumatic) to be conducted by West Australian Kanthi Perera;
- Pre-conference workshop on consciousness and yoga from Dr Usha Sundaram, who has travelled from Bangalore, India to present;
- A number of presentations from Tasmanian and Australian mental health consumers and voice hearers who will speak about their personal journeys of recovery.

The Richmond Fellowship Asia Pacific Regional Conference will commence on Wednesday 17 November at Wrest Point with pre-conference workshops, and continue on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 November.

It is being hosted by Richmond Fellowship Tasmania, which operates residential facilities, residential programs and an outreach service for more than 100 Tasmanians each week. Richmond Fellowship Tasmania has been providing mental health support services in Tasmania for over 20 years. Associated with the worldwide Richmond Fellowship International, it works closely with its counterparts in other Australian States, as well as Richmond Fellowships in India, Hong Kong and New Zealand, who collaborate as Richmond Fellowship Asia Pacific.

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