

## CONSUMER &amp; CARER ADVISORY COUNCIL

# NEWSLETTER



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## About the newsletter

Welcome to the Consumer & Carer Advisory Council's (CCAC) monthly newsletter dedicated to mental health consumers and carers like you. We are thrilled to launch this platform to provide valuable information, support, and resources to enhance your mental well-being journey.

At CCAC, our goal is to foster a sense of community, empowerment, and collaboration among mental health consumers, carers, and the broader mental health community. We understand the unique challenges you face, and we are committed to creating a space where your voices are heard, your experiences are validated, and your needs are met.

In this newsletter, you can expect a diverse range of content designed to inform, inspire, and uplift you. We will cover a variety of topics, including self-care practices, coping strategies, mental health education, stories of resilience, and the latest developments in the mental health field.

## You are invited

We invite you to actively engage with us by sharing your feedback, suggestions, and personal stories. Your input will shape the direction of this newsletter and help us better understand and address the needs of our readership. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources, educational articles, and upcoming events highlighted in each edition.

We are excited to embark on this journey with you and look forward to nurturing a community that embraces hope, resilience, and positive mental health. Together, let's navigate the complexities of mental health, celebrate our victories, and support one another every step of the way.



# NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS



## Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022

Find out about the important changes.

**Victoria's Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 commenced on 1 September 2023. The new Act replaces the Mental Health Act 2014.**

The new Act supports changes underway to transform Victoria's mental health system. The changes will deliver a new system where Victorians receive the care they need early, and in their community.

The new Act is a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 promotes good mental health and wellbeing for all Victorians.

It has new rights-based principles that promote the values, preferences and views of Victorians with mental illness or psychological distress. The new principles guide how service providers should deliver assessment, treatment, care and support. For more information on the new act, visit:

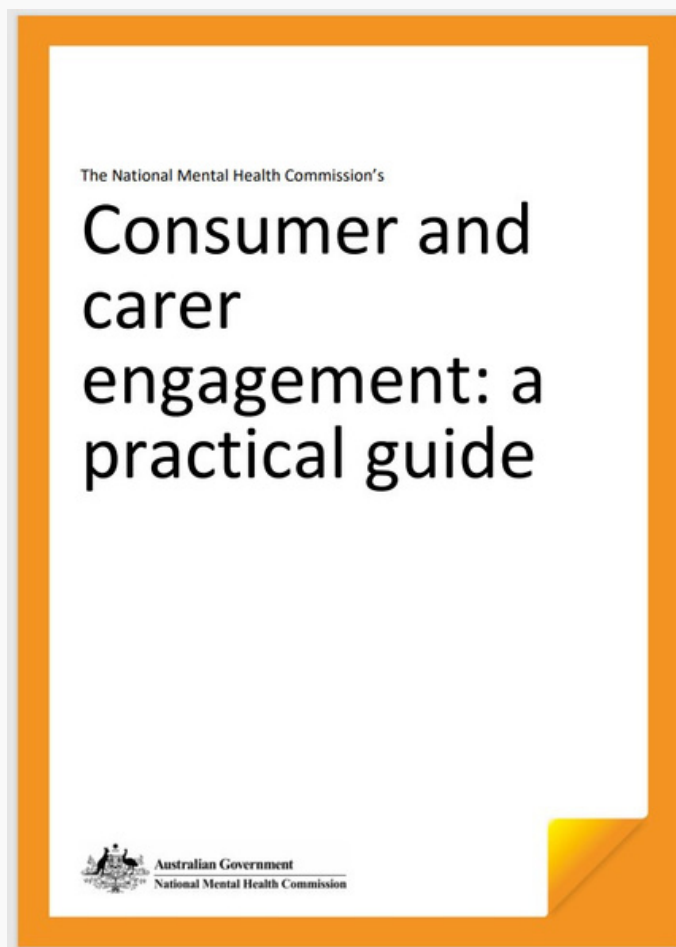
<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-act>

### Key changes guide

Open all

Foundations for a new system	▼
Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing	▼
Rights-based objectives and principles	▼
Lived experience	▼
Supporting individuals	▼
Treatment and care	▼
New roles and entities	▼
Information sharing	▼
Health-led response to mental health crises	▼

# CONSUMER AND CARER ENGAGEMENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE



Engaging with people is an essential part of delivering the best outcomes at individual, service, organization and system levels. The knowledge that consumers and carers have about what is needed is an important resource in shifting the mental health system to a genuinely person-centered, recovery focused model.

This guide is the result of the extensive work done for the National Commission on Mental Health's 2017 Engage and Participate in Mental Health project. It attempts to capture the core values and principles expressed by participants in the project who shared what engagement and participation mean to them.

This guide is intended to provide a clear framework and set of principles for best practice in consumer and carer engagement and participation. It is hoped that this guide will be read and used by mental health consumers and carers and by people working within the mental health system at all levels. As a good practice guide, it also aims to give practical advice on how to act on principles and associated values. For this reason, each principle is outlined at a high level, and illustrated with an 'applied' example.

Download Full Report:

[\*\*https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/consumer-and-carers/consumer-and-carer-engagement-\(1\)\*\*](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/consumer-and-carers/consumer-and-carer-engagement-(1))

# ONE STORY AT A TIME

*Recovery is possible!*

**Meet Sarah\***. Throughout her life, Sarah battled with anxiety and depression, often feeling overwhelmed by intense emotions and struggling to find a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Despite her ongoing struggles, Sarah was **determined** to overcome her mental health challenges and build a fulfilling life for herself.

Sarah sought **professional help** and engaged in therapy, where she learned coping **strategies** and techniques to manage her anxiety and depression. She also joined support groups and connected with others who were going through similar experiences. Through these **connections**, she found solace and a sense of belonging, realizing she was not alone in her journey.

As Sarah began to navigate her mental health journey, she discovered the power of **self-care**. She developed a **routine** that incorporated exercise, mindfulness, and activities she enjoyed. She found solace in writing, **expressing her emotions** and thoughts through journaling, poetry, and creative writing. Sarah also immersed herself in **nature**, finding comfort and serenity in spending time outdoors.

\*Sarah is a nom de plume.



Despite setbacks and moments of self-doubt, Sarah remained resilient. She embraced a **growth mindset**, viewing her mental health challenges as opportunities for personal growth and self-discovery. Sarah set small, achievable **goals** for herself, celebrating even the smallest victories along the way.

Sarah's resilience shone through during a particularly difficult period. She faced a significant setback in her recovery, experiencing a relapse that left her feeling defeated and hopeless. However, rather than giving up, Sarah sought support from her therapist, support group, and loved ones. She recognized that setbacks are a natural part of the journey and that her mental health challenges did not define her worth or potential.

Driven by her **determination** to overcome her challenges, Sarah became an **advocate** for mental health awareness and **stigmatization**. She started sharing her story openly, participating in speaking engagements, and writing articles to raise awareness about mental health issues and the importance of seeking support. Sarah's vulnerability and authenticity touched the lives of many, inspiring others to seek help and providing hope that **recovery is possible**.

Today, Sarah continues to thrive in her mental health journey. She has developed a deep sense of self-compassion and acceptance, understanding that her mental health is a continuous journey of ups and downs. Sarah continues to learn, grow, and inspire others by sharing her story of resilience, proving that with perseverance, support, and a positive mindset, individuals can overcome even the most challenging mental health obstacles and live fulfilling, meaningful lives.

**Sarah's story serves as a reminder that resilience is not about never experiencing challenges but rather about the strength to rise above them, embracing growth, and fostering hope.**

# MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

**Mental health education** plays a crucial role in promoting awareness, understanding, and support for mental well-being. It encompasses a range of activities and initiatives aimed at equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, and resources to maintain their mental health, identify signs of distress, and seek appropriate help when needed. Today we will explore the importance of mental health education and its impact on individuals and communities.

Firstly, mental health education helps to combat stigma and increase awareness. Many people still hold misconceptions and negative attitudes towards mental health conditions. By providing education on mental health, we can challenge stereotypes and promote understanding. This education empowers individuals to recognize that mental health is a vital component of overall well-being and that mental illnesses are legitimate health conditions that deserve support and care.

Furthermore, mental health education fosters early identification and intervention. When individuals are equipped with knowledge about common mental health concerns, they are more likely to recognize warning signs in themselves and others. This awareness enables early intervention, reducing the severity and duration of mental health challenges. Education can also guide individuals towards appropriate resources and support networks, ensuring they receive timely and effective assistance.

In addition, mental health education promotes self-care and resilience. It equips individuals with coping strategies and skills to manage stress, build emotional resilience, and maintain good mental health. Education on self-care practices, such as regular exercise, healthy sleep habits, and stress reduction techniques, empowers individuals to take proactive steps in caring for their mental well-being. By teaching individuals how to prioritize self-care, mental health education promotes overall wellness and prevents the development of more severe mental health issues.

Moreover, mental health education benefits not only individuals but also communities. When mental health knowledge is widespread, communities become more compassionate and supportive.

Understanding the challenges faced by individuals with mental health conditions encourages empathy and reduces discrimination. This, in turn, fosters a culture of acceptance, where individuals feel safe and comfortable seeking help and support when they need it.

Additionally, mental health education has a positive impact on academic and workplace environments. Educational institutions and employers that prioritize mental health education create supportive environments where students and employees can thrive. Awareness of mental health issues helps in developing strategies to reduce stress, improve work-life balance, and enhance overall productivity. By prioritizing mental health education, educational institutions and workplaces acknowledge the importance of holistic well-being and create spaces that nurture mental health alongside academic and professional growth.

Lastly, mental health education contributes to the larger goal of public health. By addressing mental health concerns proactively, society can reduce the burden on healthcare systems and improve overall population health. Educated individuals are more likely to seek help early, adopt healthy lifestyle practices, and support others in need. Mental health education not only saves lives but also enhances the quality of life for individuals and communities as a whole.

In conclusion, mental health education is essential for promoting well-being, reducing stigma, and fostering supportive communities. By providing individuals with knowledge, skills, and resources, mental health education empowers them to take care of their own mental well-being, identify signs of distress in others, and seek appropriate help. It is a powerful tool that not only benefits individuals but also creates healthier and more compassionate communities. As we prioritize mental health education, we move closer to a society that values and supports the mental well-being of all its members.



# COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## Food relief in the Goulburn Valley



### FOOD ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS

#### **Shepparton Family & Financial Services**

1 Naomi St, Shepparton T: 5831 7755

**Mon - Fri, 10am - 4pm**

#### **Caroline Chisholm Society**

15a St Andrews Rd, Shepparton T: 5821 0826

Emergency supplies - clothing, nappies, formula etc.

Assistance for children up to 10 years.

**Mon - Fri, 9.30am - 12.30pm. Apts after 12.30pm**

#### **SalvoCare Shepparton**

99 Nixon Street, Shepparton T: 8873 5288

**Mon, Tue, Thur, 10am - 4pm (call at 9am for apt)**

#### **St Vincent de Paul Society Shepparton**

290 Wyndham Street, Shepparton T: 5821 0317

**Mon - Fri, 10am - 12pm**

#### **South Shepparton Community Church**

15 St Andrews Road, Shepparton T: 0408 738 967

**By appointment**

#### **South Shepparton Community Centre**

290 Archer Street, Shepparton T: 5821 6172

**Mon - Fri, 9.30am - 2.30pm**

#### **The Salvation Army Kyabram Doorways**

24 Unitt St, Kyabram T: 5853 2684

Servicing Kyabram & district.

**By appointment**

#### **St Vincent de Paul Society Mooroopna**

2 Northgate Street, Mooroopna T: 5825 1888

Call to make an appointment

**Tue, Wed, Fri, 9am - 11am**

#### **Family Haven**

15 - 17 Young St, Mooroopna T: 0428 736 961

**For families only. Tue - Thu, 10am - 2pm**

#### **Compiled by Shepparton Foodshare**

**Subject to change without notice, correct as at March 2023**

#### **Rumbalara**

20 Rumbalara Rd, Mooroopna T: 5820 0000

ATSI clients only. **Mon - Fri, 9am - 4pm**

#### **Generations Op Shop**

119-121 Hogan St Tatura T: 5824 3059

**Mon - Fri, 10am - 4pm**

#### **Shalom Worship Centre Merrigum**

116 Waverley Ave, Merrigum M: 0429 866 478

**Tue & Wed, 1pm - 4pm, or call/text**

#### **Shalom Worship Centre Girgarre**

10 Morgan Crescent, Girgarre M: 0409 510 871

**Please text for assistance**

#### **Girgarre Community Cottage**

27 Olympic St, Girgarre T: 5854 6482

**Mon - Thu, 10am-3pm**

#### **Euroa Foodshare**

1A Clifton Street, Euroa T: 0491 721 024

**By appointment**

#### **Euroa Christian Fellowship**

Old School House, Clifton St, Euroa

T: 0402427955

**By appointment**

#### **Murchison Neighbourhood House**

23 Impey Street, Murchison T: 5826 2373

**Mon-Wed and Friday, 9am-3pm**

#### **Love In Action Broadford Living & Learning Centre**

58 High St, Broadford T: 0473 845 808

Assistance for the Broadford community in need

**Mon - Thu by apt or Fri collections, 11am - 2pm**

☎ 0432 517 329

📍 45 Toolamba Rd, Mooroopna VIC 3629

✉ info@sheppartonfoodshare.org.au

🌐 sheppartonfoodshare.org.au

📘 /sheppartonfoodshare

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES



## Food relief in the Goulburn Valley



## COMMUNITY MEALS PROGRAMS

### **Mooroopna Education & Activity Centre**

23 Alexandra St, Mooroopna T: 5825 1774

\$8 per meal - 2 courses

**Tue, 12pm - open to all**

**Bookings necessary**

### **St Vinnies GV Region**

Old Mooroopna Hospital

**Fri, 12pm - 1pm**

### **Family Haven**

15 - 17 Young St, Mooroopna T: 0428 736 961

Lunch - For families only

**Tue - Thu, 12pm - 1pm**

### **Murchison Neighbourhood House**

23 Impey Street, Murchison T: 5826 2373

**Mon & Wed, 12 noon - open to all**

\$5 per meal - 2 courses

### **The Salvation Army**

99 Nixon St, Shepparton T: 5821 2666

Gold coin donation appreciated

**Wed, 11.45am - 1.30pm**

### **People Supporting People**

Lutfiyes Shish Kebabs

338 Wyndham Street, Shepparton.

**Mon - Fri, 4pm - 5pm**

-  0432 517 329
-  45 Toolamba Road, Mooroopna VIC 3629
-  info@sheppartonfoodshare.org.au
-  sheppartonfoodshare.org.au
-  /sheppartonfoodshare



**Compiled by Shepparton Foodshare.  
Subject to change without notice,  
correct as at March 2023**



# MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

## 'Predicting Suicidal Thoughts and Nonfatal Attempts'

**"A Longitudinal Study of Universal Prevention in Public Schools" is a significant research study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) in 2019.**

The study aimed to evaluate **a universal prevention program** implemented in public schools and identify **factors associated with suicidal thoughts** and nonfatal suicide attempts among adolescents.

The researchers conducted a longitudinal analysis, following a large sample of students over a period of time. They implemented a universal prevention program in public schools, which involved providing mental health education, raising awareness about suicide prevention, and offering support services to students. The study collected data on various factors including demographic information, mental health history, social support, and previous suicide attempts.

**The findings of the study** highlighted several important factors associated with suicidal thoughts and nonfatal suicide attempts among adolescents. The researchers identified risk factors such as previous suicidal ideation, mental health disorders, substance abuse, and exposure to suicidal behaviours among peers. They also found that social support, resilience, and access to mental health services were protective factors that reduced the likelihood of suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Moreover, **the study developed a predictive model** based on the collected data, which aimed **to identify individuals at higher risk** of experiencing suicidal thoughts or engaging in nonfatal suicide attempts. This model could be valuable for identifying and providing targeted support to at-risk students.

The research demonstrated the importance of implementing comprehensive **prevention programs in schools** to address mental health concerns and prevent suicide. By identifying risk factors and protective factors, the study provided valuable insights into the complex nature of suicidal thoughts and nonfatal suicide attempts among adolescents. The findings can guide policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals in developing effective prevention strategies and support systems within school settings.

*Smith, J. D., Johnson, A. B., & Thompson, C. D. (2019). Predicting suicidal thoughts and nonfatal attempts: A longitudinal study of universal prevention in public schools. Journal of the American Medical Association, 302(4), 567-582.*

# INSPIRING WORDS OF WISDOM

## **Don't hesitate to seek help**

"Your mental health matters. Don't hesitate to seek help, for reaching out is a sign of strength. Together, we can create a world where mental health is embraced, supported, and understood."

### Strength and Resilience

"Your mental health journey is a testament to your strength and resilience. Embrace the challenges, for they shape your growth and transform you into a warrior of the mind."

### You are a unique individual

"Remember, you are not defined by your struggles. Your mental health does not diminish your worth. You are a unique individual with immeasurable strength and limitless potential."

### Keep moving forward

"Recovery is not a straight path; it's a courageous dance of progress and setbacks. Keep moving forward, even if it's just one step at a time. Every small step counts."

# GUEST ARTICLE

*Dr Ravi Bhat recognised with AM*

In recognition of his contributions to the field of psychiatry, Dr Ravi Bhat has been bestowed with the prestigious becoming a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the general division. It is in honour of his significant service to medicine, and to rural psychiatry.

The divisional clinical director of mental health services at Goulburn Valley Health and associate professor of psychiatry with the Department of Rural Health has demonstrated a commitment to his patients that has not only transformed lives but also earned him recognition in the King's Birthday honours list.

"I feel very honoured," he said.

"It's not something that I was expecting... [but] very happy that working in a rural area has been recognised, so to me that is probably more important..... and we continue to work away at improving health for our rural communities," he said.

Dr Bhat said the recognition was not only a personal triumph but also a celebration of all his colleagues.

"All of my colleagues and psychiatrists, they have chosen to stay here which is what makes a big difference.

"You know, once people decide, it's worth staying here, then you can do something more [in mental health services] and move forward."

He said the importance of mental health professionals in rural areas was paramount as the mental health burden in Australia continued to increase.

"Across Australia, about a third of Australians live in rural Australia, but only about one in 10 psychiatrists and a little more of mental health nurses live in rural Australia.

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"Across Australia, about a third of Australians live in rural Australia, but only about one in 10 psychiatrists and a little more of mental health nurses live in rural Australia.

"There is a big disparity in terms of the impact on people's lives with mental health illness and the availability of helping professionals," he said.

Dr Bhat moved to Shepparton from India in 1999 with his family and said he was initially hesitant to take up the position of consultant psychiatrist at GV Health.

However, he said it was the local community that eased the transition for him and his young family.

"The [Shepparton] community was extraordinarily kind, in many ways there were lots of acts of generosity [from] complete strangers which was really nice."

Beyond his endeavours in healthcare, he is a valued board member of Goulburn Valley Grammar School, a member of the Shepparton Art Museum and a supporter of local theatre arts groups.

"When I'm meant to think more about [the AM], I feel that it's a recognition for working in rural areas, so I hope what this means is that more people think, yeah actually we don't have to work in Melbourne, or in Sydney, we can work rurally and still get good things done.

"I hope it sends that message," he said.

# RECOGNITION & APPRECIATION



## Acknowledgement of Country

CCAC acknowledges that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognize the intergenerational impact of the history of invasion, dispossession and colonization and are committed to the recognition, respect, inclusion and wellbeing of Australia's first peoples.

For more information, visit <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>



## Other Acknowledgements

CCAC acknowledges the individual and collective contributions of those with a lived and living experience of mental ill-health and suicide, and those who love, have loved and care for them.

CCAC values the experience and contribution of people from all cultures, genders, sexualities, bodies, abilities, spiritualities, ages and backgrounds.

The Flannel Flower, an Australian native, has been chosen as the national symbol to promote mental health awareness in Australia.

The Australian bush has an inherent beauty and strength. It is also known for its extremes of weather and landscape. Varieties of the Flannel Flower are commonly found growing wild in the bush throughout Australia. The Flannel Flower, as with all native Australian plants, needs to be adaptable and enduring in order to survive.

In the same way all of us, regardless of our life circumstances, develop resilience and the ability to adapt to change, in order to maintain good mental health.

Being open and empathetic to a person's expression of distress can assist in the recovery of a person living with mental illness and change the negative attitudes of our society as a whole.



### Contact us:

We value your feedback and questions. If you have any inquiries, suggestions, or simply want to connect with us, please feel free to reach out. You can contact us through the following channels:

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PHONE: 03 58 32 2111

MOBILE: 0448 283 596