



**The VMHSW Presents:  
*The Unique Contribution of  
Social Workers to Mental Health  
Practice***

**10 October 2018**



## A Word from the Artist

Spend a moment seeing life through my eyes, while looking at this nameless art piece. I think I always had the ability to see things differently, the beauty in the obtrusive pain. I see beauty everywhere, probably because there is so much pain. I spend so much time in my mind looking back on my life, looking at it all in flashbacks and supercuts, as if it were a film, wondering how and why, where I found myself or if I'd even found myself. Thanking the universe, helping me discover my gifts I can now share with the world because I know how hard it is not to know where you're going, who you are, and what to do next, what's right and what's wrong, what it's like to be crippled by anxiety and depression that nothing seems possible, what it's like to just want to get better but feeling as if it never will. But it does. It really is possible. I found the path to healing through my work, my art and my entire reason to keep living. I found freedom in communicating with so many people who make me realise that I'm not alone in this world that's so lonely. I look back on the nights spent awake in unruly hours creating artwork just trying to feel understood or trying to find a release for all the things that I felt. At the lowest part of my life I found the one thing that will carry me forever – that it does get better.

## Welcome

VMHSW are pleased to welcome you to our Day Conference on 'The Unique Contribution of Social Work to Mental Health Practice'. Building on the success and lessons learned from last year's theme "New and Emerging Areas Mental Health Social Work", we have two great Keynote Speakers, three in-depth concurrent workshops as well as 'Ignite Sessions', a special presentation by Professor Lynette Joubert and plenty of opportunity for networking!

Presenters will address a diverse range of topics including: Elder Abuse & Carer Impact; Reclaiming Lives from Sexual Violence; The Case Against Involuntary Mental Health Treatment; Narrative Therapy/ Tree of Life, Homelessness in Australia, Social (Net) Working and Youth Oncology Care. We aim to facilitate a stimulating opportunity for robust thought and discussion and hope to give social workers working in mental health an opportunity to have exposure to a range of practice issues and collaborate, share and learn.

## Keynote Speakers

### Keynote 1 Briony Dow



Director, NARI. Hon Associate Professor, School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne. BSW MA PhD

Briony Dow is Director of the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) and Hon Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne. At NARI, Briony oversees a range of both social and clinical gerontology research programs, including her own research into elder abuse and carer mental health. Briony has been at NARI for 15 years during which time she has published over 60 peer reviewed publications and over 30 major reports to government. Prior to her work at NARI, Briony practiced as a social worker in community aged care. She is a past President of the Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) and she represents NARI and the AAG on the Australian Government's Aged Care Data Advisory Group and the Australian Aged Care Quality Indicators Technical Advisory Panel.

### **Elder Abuse and Ageing**

This presentation will explore elder abuse as an intergenerational issue and how it relates to mental health of both the older person and the perpetrator. Elder abuse is defined as 'a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person' (WHO). Elder abuse may involve financial, physical, emotional, sexual or social mistreatment or neglect of an older person. It is often seen as a form of family violence, as when it occurs outside of the formal health and aged care systems, it is usually perpetrated by a family member.

## Keynote 2 Tim Donovan



Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and professional counsellor  
BSW, Masters of Narrative Therapy and Community Work (Hons)

Tim Donovan is a mental health social worker with a background working as a corporate business analyst. While working with clients who experienced sexual abuse, he met 'Dale' and will present Dale's story of his fight for justice and freedom from shame. The stories Tim hears in his work often represent a political act against acts of oppression. Tim currently works as a school counsellor for a secondary college in Alice Springs and is the author of 'Reclaiming lives from sexual violence' in The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work (2018).

## Dale Johns



Dale Johns has volunteered in pastoral care for the 19 years and community advocacy for 5 years. He loves the arts – including coffee art - and has a passion for helping people. At 12 years of age, Dale was violently sexually abused by a Catholic priest for a period of two years – he met Tim while receiving counselling. Dale recently spoke at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse where Tim supported him and helped him understand that the guilt and shame he had carried for 40 years was not his. Through this understanding Dale was able to climb out of the black hole he was in, and no longer live in silence.

**\*Note:** presentation will include an outsider-witness response from conference attendees

### **Narrative Therapy: Reclaiming Lives from Sexual Violence**

Challenging myths about childhood sexual abuse and helping survivors to identify their hard-won knowledges and values, enables survivors to contribute to others who have experienced abuse. By confronting myths about childhood sexual violence, we can create openings for survivors to resist the silencing effects of shame, gain distance from a problem-saturated life story, and identify values and commitments that can provide the basis for a meaningful life that is no longer defined by the experience of abuse.

# Workshops

## Workshop 1 Chris Maylea



Chris Maylea is a mental health social worker, mental health lawyer, academic and consultant. His experience includes managing community mental health services, representing consumers before the Mental Health Tribunal, and consulting to government bodies including the National Mental Health Commission, the NSW Mental Health Commission and the NSW Mental Health Branch. Chris' research focuses on the experiences of involuntary mental health treatment, and he is currently evaluating Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA), working on a research project exploring the experiences of women who have experienced gendered violence in mental health inpatient units. He is also a member of the Equally Well project team, working to reduce the mortality gap for people with a diagnosis of mental illness.

### **How Social Workers Can Work Toward Ending Involuntary Treatment in Mental Health**

Mental health social workers have traditionally viewed involuntary treatment as a 'regrettable necessity', uncritically incorporating it into their practice. As with other coercive interventions, such as seclusion, restraint and detention, involuntary treatment is nearly always experienced as traumatic and stigmatising; harming the therapeutic relationship and eroding the trust essential to good social work relationships. These coercive interventions are inconsistent with international law, incompatible with the Recovery model, deny social citizenship, and are based on misguided assumptions about risk and capacity. Social workers are well positioned to shift the discourse towards practice approaches which are more in line with social work values and theories. Other disciplines, such as law, psychology, psychiatry and sociology have already engaged with this issue, having mature debates about how to work towards ending involuntary treatment. Chris will explore lessons we can learn from other disciplines, and how they can be applied in contemporary social work practice. Participants will be encouraged to identify areas in their own practice where they might reduce involuntary treatment, barriers to this and how they might be overcome. This guided session will be interactive, informative and practice-based. What will social work's unique contribution to ending involuntary treatment be?

## Workshop 2 Tim Donovan and Dale Johns

### **Tree of Life Project – Exploring your history of showing compassion to others**

By labelling the different parts of the tree to reflect your past, present and future experiences, you not only begin to discover (or perhaps rediscover) aspects of yourself shaped by the past, but you can then begin to actively cultivate your tree to reflect the kind of person you want to be whilst moving forward.

By exploring our inner life stories that form the events we choose to highlight and contextualize, you will learn how to discover and highlight alternate paths through our past—which in turn create new horizons in our future.

### **Tree of Life Project – Understanding your History of Choosing a Career that Contributes to People’s Lives**

This approach enables people to speak about their lives in ways that make them stronger. It involves people drawing their own ‘tree of life’ in which they get to speak of their ‘roots’ (where they come from), their skills and knowledge, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives. Participants will join their trees into a ‘forest of life’ and, in groups, discuss some of the ‘storms’ that affect their lives and ways that they respond to these storms, protect themselves, and each other.

## Workshop 3 Jenny Smith



Jenny Smith is the CEO of the Council to Homeless Persons, Victoria’s peak body for homelessness, and has 25 years in leadership and management roles in policy, management, government, in training and service delivery, and in health, mental health, community health and community sectors.

CHP works towards ending homelessness by:

- Campaigning for policy changes that will end homelessness
- Building the capacity of services that work with people experiencing homelessness
- Involving consumers in the process of improving the sector
- Elevating the problem of homelessness as an issue in the public domain
- Contributing to research that will improve policy

Jenny has co-authored several publications including the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy, Australian Social Work and The British Journal of Psychiatry. She is a qualified social worker, and family therapist.

### **Homelessness in Australia**

Jenny will present on her work on homelessness in Australia, creating policy change, capacity-building, consumer involvement, raising awareness and the relationship between homelessness and mental health.



## Special Presentation

### Lynette Joubert



BA Hons Med SW, MA Clin Psych

Lynette Joubert is a senior lecturer at the University of Melbourne, Honorary Associate Professor at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre and Honorary Professor at Universite France-Comte, France.

Lynette trained as a clinical psychologist and social worker and is interested in the relationship of social network factors to recovery and rehabilitation.

She is a member of the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee, the Postgraduate Degree Coordinator in Social Work and has an extensive publication record on social risk and health and mental health.

#### **Responding to social isolation and improving social connectedness: the importance of social networks in effective practice**

Professor Lynette Joubert's research agenda examines theoretical concerns about the contribution of psychosocial factors to health and mental health: most significantly in the areas of suicide prevention, dementia and oncology, with a specific focus on the significance of social determinants as risks factors for chronic disease.

# Ignite

## Ignite Session 1 Andrew O'Sullivan



Andrew O'Sullivan began his career in general health social work and moved into mental health where he has worked in a variety of roles including, inpatient, community, dual diagnosis, project management and training. Andrew currently works as a training consultant and as a Chief Social Worker in North Western Mental Health and sees building relationships and communication as fundamental to his social work practice.

### **Social (Net)Working**

As social workers we often work with people to increase the connections they have with people. We recognise that increasing the number of positive relationships people have, often brings about good outcomes. As social workers, how do we build, maintain and benefit from our own professional networks? Networking can be simple in theory and powerful in practice.

## Ignite Session 2 Ilana Berger



Ilana Berger is a social worker with over 25 years' experience in the oncology field. She is the Team Leader with ONTrac at Peter Mac Victorian Adolescent & Young Adult Cancer Service and is committed to the delivery of high quality, evidenced-based clinical care for young people and their families, affected by cancer. Ilana is also Youth Participation Coordinator in Victoria ensuring the active engagement of young people in the design and delivery of cancer services and initiatives. She has a Master of Advanced Social Work from Melbourne University with her research focusing on care delivery to young people with incurable cancer.

### **Sex, Drugs and Cancer: Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Care**

Adolescents & young adults (AYA) with cancer are a unique cohort as the timing of ill-health coincides with a period of critical growth and development. Delivering quality youth cancer care encompasses consideration of these transitions while being cognisant of the reciprocal relationship between cancer and development. Social workers are well-positioned to support young people to navigate the journey of cancer while traversing the road into adulthood.



## Schedule

Time	Event
8:45-9:15	Registration
9:15-9:30	Welcome
9:30-10:30	<b>Keynote Speaker 1</b> – Associate Professor Briony Dow: <i>Elder Abuse and Ageing</i>
10:30-11:00	Morning Tea
11:00-12:30	<b>Workshops</b> 1 – Dr Chris Maylea: <i>How Social Workers Can Work Towards Ending Involuntary Treatment in Mental Health</i> 2 – Tim Donovan and Dale Johns: <i>Tree of Life: Exploring Your History of Showing Compassion to Others</i> 3 – Jenny Smith: <i>Homelessness in Australia</i>
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:00	<b>Ignite Presentations</b> 1 – Andrew O’Sullivan: <i>Social (Net)Working</i> 2 – Ilana Berger: <i>Sex, Drugs and Cancer: Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Care</i>
2:00-3:00	<b>Keynote Speakers 2</b> – Tim Donovan and Dale Johns: <i>Narrative Therapy - Reclaiming Lives from Sexual Violence</i>
3:00-3:30	Afternoon Tea
3:30-4:15	<b>Presentation</b> – Professor Lynette Joubert: <i>Responding to Social Isolation and Improving Social Connectedness: The Importance of Social Networks in Effective Practice</i>
4:15-4:30	Close