



SPRING 2019

# mind view

## Housing is good mental health care



**E**nsuring people with mental health challenges have a place to call home is a key priority for Mind.

Australia has a chronic shortage of affordable housing and people with mental ill-health are especially disadvantaged in the country's competitive housing market. Being unemployed or underemployed and on a low income makes it difficult to afford rental accommodation and get the bond and references it requires.

For those unable to live with family or friends, the all too common alternatives are temporary and often unsafe solutions such as rooming houses, emergency shelters, couch surfing and living on the streets. Meanwhile, how can people hope to stabilise their mental health when they don't have the stability of a safe and secure living environment?

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You simply can't recover or stay well if you don't have somewhere safe and secure to live.

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# Dear friend,

**R**egular *Mind View* readers may remember Ben who shared his story in our Spring 2018 issue. Before he came to live at our supported independent living residence in Preston (Melbourne), 21 year old Ben had never lived anywhere longer than four to six months since leaving home at 14 years of age. That was everywhere from cheap hotels to emergency accommodation to living on the streets. Imagine the impact that would have on any teenager's psychological stability, let alone one with a combination of pre-existing mental health conditions.

Not surprisingly when Ben first came to our Preston residence he was agitated and volatile and it took some months for his support staff to gain his trust. Once he realised he was now in a safe and secure environment he began to flourish, learning new life skills and enjoying life. A year later, he is still doing brilliantly at the Preston residence. Among recent accomplishments, he scored four goals at a recent game for his soccer team, the Northern Falcons All Abilities team. (You can read his full story in *Mind View Spring 2018* on [mindaustralia.org.au](http://mindaustralia.org.au) at *About Mind > Publications*).

Ben's good news story warms the heart but, as our Trajectories research project into the interrelationships between mental ill-health and homelessness is proving, there are thousands of other people still out there who are unsupported and having their mental ill-health exacerbated by the trauma of unsafe and uncertain living conditions.

Ensuring somewhere safe and secure to call home is one of our greatest responsibilities and challenges, not just for mental health organisations like us, or for homelessness services and charities, but for our government and our community.

As a progressive society we have to do more than provide the stopgap measures of emergency accommodation or providing residential accommodation for a fortunate few. For our part we are taking a multi-pronged and bigger picture approach to this most serious of mental health issues, including:

- building new specialised housing projects through our subsidiary The Haven Foundation
- undertaking a major research project that will identify key opportunities for us, other organisations and government to improve access to appropriate housing options for

people with mental ill-health, and an advocacy program to encourage state and federal governments to adopt those opportunities

- using our research capabilities to make significant submissions to the federal government's Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System
- using rigorous evaluation to ensure our different kinds of residential supports are the best they can be and introducing process improvements to make it easier for Mind clients and their families to access our services.

This edition of *Mind View* explores these different facets of our work at Mind to improve the quality and range of housing options. I hope it will inspire you to keep the conversation going in Australia about addressing this crucial area of need.

Warm regards,

Robyn Hunter  
Chief Executive Officer



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Mind cares for the environment and uses environmentally-friendly inks on recycled paper.



“Working to ensure that people have somewhere to live while they recover and somewhere to live their life is part of Mind’s DNA,” says Dr Sarah Pollock, Mind’s Executive Director of Research and Advocacy.

“We exist today for the same reason our organisation started over 40 years ago - because a group of people wanted to address the need of family members with mental health conditions for somewhere appropriate to live.”

Our mission hasn’t changed, but almost everything else has. Sadly, the need for housing support has only grown larger since then.

“When we had community consultations in 2015 to help us set the priorities for our research and advocacy agenda, housing was overwhelmingly the number one issue for people,” Dr Pollock says. “We spoke to over 250 people with mental ill-health, their family members and carers and to 250 Mind staff and the message came back loud and clear.”

Mind is tackling this need by doing the research that will help us, other agencies and the government to develop better mental health and housing strategies, to partner with clinical services for provision of a broader range of residential options for people with mental ill-health, and to build new suitable residential properties.

This edition of *Mind View* looks at why safe, stable housing is so important for people with mental health conditions. It introduces the research and building programs we are undertaking at Mind to improve access to supported housing in Australia. Our thanks to Garry and his sister for sharing their story to help others understand what a difference a stable home and the right support can make. ■

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Dr Sarah Pollock



# Building places to call home

**T**he Haven Foundation's building program is providing badly needed housing and support for people with mental health conditions.

"The merger of Mind Australia and The Haven Foundation has been very successful," says Professor Allan Fels AO, a founder and Director of The Haven Foundation. "We both particularly stress the importance of the role of families and carers in mental illness and the very large contribution that they can make to recovery."

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Fels' daughter Isabella has been a resident at Haven's first residence, in South Yarra, since it opened in 2010.

Last year Haven opened its first purpose-built residence, in Frankston (Haven South Yarra was established in an existing building) and construction is about to begin on its next residential development, in Geelong. This will have 16 self-contained one-bedroom units for residents, common kitchen, dining, recreation and meeting areas, and facilities for its qualified and experienced around-the-clock support staff.

Haven South Yarra, Haven Frankston and soon Haven Geelong will mean security, support and long term stability for people from those communities who have manageable mental health conditions.

"The provision of accommodation, care and support is a pre-requisite for them achieving the best possible results in life," Prof. Fels says.

"Accommodation without care and support is insufficient. Likewise, care and support without accommodation does not work very well. If for example a person has been in hospital and is discharged and spends the night sleeping under a bridge, they will almost certainly relapse and will return to hospital."



Thanks to a \$7.5 million funding commitment by the Victorian Government The Haven Foundation's third purpose-built residential project, Haven Laverton, is also expected to begin construction by the end of 2019 and another is in the planning stages in Epping on Melbourne's northern outskirts. ■



# Garry's Haven is his home

**W**alking through Garry's home at Haven Frankston is like stepping into the 1960s. Every inch of wall is covered in posters of Elvis, The Beatles and other legendary musicians. His impressive record collection overflows from the shelves and he wouldn't have it any other way – this is his home.

Garry has been happily living at The Haven Foundation's new 16 unit Frankston residence since it opened in October 2018. The Haven Foundation was established to ensure its founders' loved ones had appropriate housing and the support needed to live as independently as possible. Haven Frankston is The Haven Foundation's second development, with five more planned in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The Haven Foundation and Mind merged in 2018 with common values and a shared mission to help people gain mental health and to improve the quality of their lives.

Prior to moving into his own unit at Haven Frankston, Garry had bounced around from place to place. After the death of his father and the breakdown of his marriage, the 63-year-old had no consistency with his living arrangements and was often moving. During this time, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

"Moving around was tough," Garry says. "But I've got my own independence now – I'm living my life. Living at Haven keeps me busy and it's better than being by myself. There's always something happening here and it's good for me, socially, to meet some new people. I can have a cup of tea, talk with others and make new friends."

**“** Moving around was tough. But I've got my own independence now – I'm living my life. **”**

Having secure housing and a safe environment to call home has been a crucial part of Garry's recovery journey, according to his sister Robyn. She has noticed considerable improvement in Garry's health and wellbeing since moving to Haven Frankston.

"I still pinch myself how lucky we are that Garry can call Haven his home," she says. "He is a lot happier now. Garry took to it very easily and he quite enjoyed setting up his own space and making it feel like home."

"I love the idea that each resident has their own cooking facilities and they don't have to participate if they don't want to. Garry has the freedom to visit other people's units and we can visit him whenever we want to. I think sharing in other people's stories and knowing he's not the only one going through a rough trot has been comforting for him."

Garry's favourite place to hang out is the big community room, where there's always something happening; whether it's a pool competition, a game of Monopoly or even a live music performance from the man himself. Garry has endured his share of the blues in his life, but with a safe and secure place to call home, most of his blues now emanate from his guitar. ■





# Researching the links between mental health and housing

**W**e already know from research that poor mental health is a risk factor for homelessness and that, in turn, unstable housing and homelessness can worsen existing mental health problems. However, neither the housing nor the mental health systems currently deal with these interrelationships.

This has been a serious and long-standing missed opportunity for either system to support vulnerable people in a strategic way to prevent housing and mental health issues from escalating and exacerbating each other.

That's why Mind is undertaking the Trajectories national research project, in partnership with Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI).

"The purpose of Trajectories is to do a really comprehensive examination of the housing and mental health support systems and people's experiences of them in order to identify the pain points - which are also opportunities to do something different and better," Mind's Executive Director Research and Advocacy Dr Sarah Pollock says.

To ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of the failure points in the respective pathways, our Trajectories team undertook more than 100 interviews with



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people with lived experience of mental ill-health and their carers in communities right around Australia, from Hobart to Alice Springs.

It was important to capture different demographics and social determinants to ensure a complete understanding of the challenges people face when accessing the mental health and housing systems in Australia. This was only made possible by the support and cooperation of local groups.

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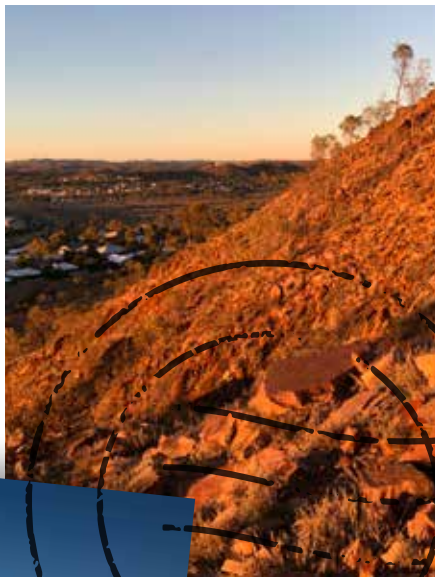
“These partnerships have been so important because the local groups know their locations so well. In return, we have been able to provide them valuable evidence in their own work. We also held focus groups with service providers to learn more about their experiences trying to support people with mental ill-health across agencies.”

Local organisations were particularly helpful for consultations in Port Hedland, Western Australia. The research team found that connecting to culture and country was a crucial part of mental health and wellbeing for Indigenous Australians. We learned from people who participated in our community consultations that activities that connect people to culture and country - such as art,

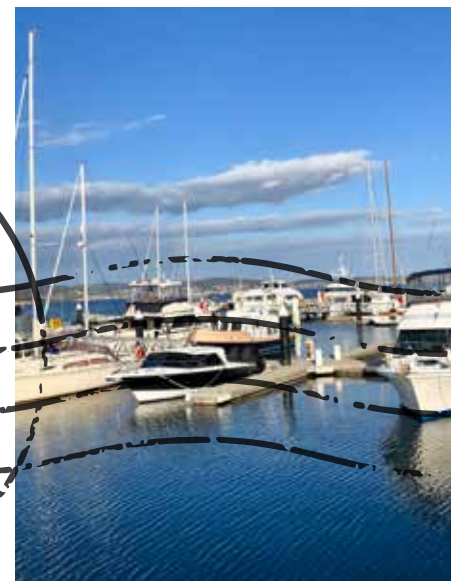
caring for the environment, legal redress and land title claims - can be decisive points in the recovery journey.

The national consultations for this project are nearly finished, so what happens with the material they have gathered?

The Trajectories team will develop a series of case studies that illustrate typical experiences of the housing and mental health pathways. These case studies will be informed by a research synthesis of both Australian and international literature, data, including statistical research of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) database, and the findings from the Trajectories community consultations.



*From Hobart to Alice Springs, the Trajectories team visited cities and towns around Australia to better understand how mental health and housing interrelate.*



To learn more about the Trajectories research project visit [ahuri.edu.au/research/research-in-progress-trajectories](http://ahuri.edu.au/research/research-in-progress-trajectories).

To gather a rounded perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of mental health and housing pathways, the team will then hold seven service provider consultations.

“These steps put us in a really good position to identify the points at which the system is really weak, provide the breadth of evidence – including both service user and provider perspectives – to understand what helps and what hinders our support for people,” Dr Pollock says.

Once this has been completed, the Trajectories project will move into advocacy mode, hosting workshops to engage with policy makers and government agencies to understand policy perspectives and advocate for system change.

“These policy transfer workshops are in recognition of the fact that research alone makes no difference – we need a formal strategy, and engagement with policy makers to convert our findings into policy change,” Dr Pollock says.

These policy workshops are expected to take place in December and January 2020. ■



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### Trajectories 4 stage process

#### 1. Quantitative research

– Undertake a comprehensive analysis of existing national and state data sets including HILDA (Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia).

#### 2. Qualitative research

– Undertake community consultations around Australia to develop a set of case studies which show how housing and mental health intersect.

#### 3. Sector workshops

– Gain the perspectives of housing and mental health service providers about the opportunities, challenges and gaps in service provision.

#### 4. Advocacy

– Use the research to identify intervention points and achieve improved outcomes through ‘policy transfer’ workshops with policy makers.





# Measuring outcomes to deliver better services

To make sure Mind clients, their families and carers are getting the very best support from our services, our Research and Advocacy division is developing a new approach to measuring client and carer outcomes.

We have invested in developing a rigorous evaluation system that will enable us to monitor the progress of individual service users and understand how each of our services is working and how it could be improved.

The Research and Advocacy division worked with organisational consultants Social Ventures Australia to develop models that show how our various support services expect to impact on people’s lives. Models were developed for Mind’s nine different service types, in consultation with staff, clients and carers. These models clearly identify the expected outcomes for each service.

They next developed a series of questionnaires to measure important outcomes. Clients will complete these questionnaires about their mental health and wellbeing with staff when they first start receiving support and also when they exit the service. This will enable them to document and reflect on their progress and these discussions will also encourage and help guide their future planning and goal setting.

“Collecting this information can be useful for a person to track their own progress towards recovery and also for Mind to understand how our services are working and how we can further improve,” Mind’s Research and Evaluation Manager Dr Elise Davis says.

“Through collecting data to capture progress, we will be able to examine data across our services and gain insight into what works best for different people. This information is also useful for Mind to share the impact that we are having with our funders and contribute to the

evidence that exists around best practice. As an evidence-informed service, we hope Mind can become the industry leaders.”

Mind staff will also benefit from this practice; being able to objectively capture the progress of people using our services will show them how their work is making a difference.

“This information will help staff to shape our services to better meet the needs of our clients and deliver their desired outcomes to the highest standards.” ■

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# In brief

## NDIS, funding changes and staff impacts

Mind has been working hard to transition to the NDIS and in recent times we received some temporary additional funding that allowed us to extend our support for people yet to transition to the NDIS.

This additional funding, which replaced previous commonwealth programs, enabled Mind to extend the contracts of staff working on those programs until 30 November, in line with the funding end dates. We welcomed this opportunity to support the successful transition of clients into the NDIS or Continuity of Support or other relevant programs.

However, with the cessation of the temporary funding, we have made a number of roles redundant and we are farewelling a number of our highly valued colleagues. In addition, in South Australia, Mind has been notified of a 25 per cent funding reduction.

This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges we face: how to continue to provide the amazing care and support that we are collectively proud of at Mind, amid constant funding turbulence and disruption. It is a very tricky landscape and I am very grateful for the commitment and dedication of the Mind team during this uncertainty.

Mind remains committed to retaining staff and supporting staff to transition to other roles within Mind. This is possible where there are funding extensions and new contracts in the same geographic region, sadly not often the case. In the last edition of *Mind View* we were excited to announce new services in Cairns and Mackay following a funding boost announced by the Queensland Government. I am delighted to add that Ipswich staff are being redeployed from one service to a newly commissioned youth service.

We are striving to keep up with the pace of change; at the same time, the stakes are rising as we are constantly adapting to the changes in funding without disrupting daily operations. In 40 years, our mission hasn't changed, but almost everything else has! Mind's strategic goals remain the same and we make a real difference through what I call the trifecta – sustainable quality services, research and advocacy. This involves change, imagination, investment and commitment.

Robyn Hunter, CEO



## Want to stop smoking?

Do you know a Mind client who would like to cut back or stop smoking?

Mind is looking for people who use our services to participate in a research project that will help us understand the best ways to support people to stop smoking.

Participants in the research will have the opportunity to participate in a stop smoking program as well as provide their valuable insights into what has helped and hindered them when they have tried to stop smoking. They will also be reimbursed for their time.



If you or someone you know would like to know more please contact us at [quitlink@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:quitlink@newcastle.edu.au) or call 0400 622 483.



## Sweet smell of success

A group of Mind residents have been developing their social, work and business related skills by creating their own body scrubs and room sprays and selling them at a local farmer's market.

From designing a brand, creating budgets and understanding the importance of planning, this program has provided residents with an opportunity to engage in work programs with tangible goals.

The group recently took their creations to a local market and made more than \$400 on their first day. Their goal is to fund a camping trip together with the money raised.



## NDIS Certification audit

We are pleased to announce that Mind has been successfully audited as part of the NDIS Certification process. This follows a week long site audit by an NDIS auditing team from BSI Australia of six Mind sites around Australia.

## Carer Helpline

We want all families and carers to get information, support and services they need, when they need it. Our Carer Helpline provides over-the-phone counselling, as well as information on a range of support services. The Carer Helpline can be reached on 1300 554 660.



## Smoking and schizophrenia

Members of Mind's Research and Advocacy division have published a research paper providing a lived experience account of the psychosocial barriers and enablers of giving up smoking for people living with schizophrenia.

The paper by members of Mind's Research and Advocacy division, Nadine Cocks and Anthony Stratford, and research partner Dr Lisa Brophy has been published in the *Frontiers in Psychiatry* journal and can be viewed at [frontiersin.org/journals/psychiatry](http://frontiersin.org/journals/psychiatry).

## DONATION FORM

Make a real difference to the lives of people recovering from mental ill-health.

You can donate by credit card online at [mindaustralia.org.au](http://mindaustralia.org.au) at

Home page > About Mind > How you can support our work

or by using the form below.

I would like to make a tax deductible donation to Mind (Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible)

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