

## Media Release

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### Unique new centre boosts health and wellbeing support for LGBTIQ community

A unique and dedicated LGBTIQ specialist mental health and wellbeing centre is now open, offering psychological counselling, family and relationship counselling, occupational therapy and sex therapy in a safe and supportive environment.

Based on a new model of care, the centre will also aim to help link people into legal, jobs and housing support – important connections for a group of people who experience discrimination in many areas of their lives.

The Mind Equality Centre in North Fitzroy will celebrate its official opening on 23 May with special guests Minister for Mental Health and Equality Martin Foley and transgender entertainer Jordan Raskopoulos.

“This is an incredibly proud moment for Mind,” said Bronwyn Lawman, Mind’s Executive Director of Operations.

“The LGBTIQ community have the highest rate of suicide in Australia and much higher rates of mental illness than the general population. (Rosenstreich, 2011)

“We are also seeing high rates of LGBTIQ people experiencing anxiety, depression and high impact disorders such as bi-polar disorder, psychosis and a range of trauma related conditions.

“Young LGBTIQ people in particular are struggling, with twice as many likely to engage in self-injury (than the general population), and that figure doubles for those identifying as transgender.

“Mind is making it a priority to help fill the gap and roll out a model of care that meets both the mental health and wellbeing needs of the LGBTIQ community, but also provides strong linkages to other services,” Ms Lawman said.

Minister for Mental Health and Equality Martin Foley said, “The vision and efforts of the Mind Equality Centre is to be commended. We know access to health services is a genuine barrier for the LGBTIQ community – and we need to see more leadership like Mind’s to overcome this. It’s great to see a model of care that looks at the whole person and aims to provide pathways to the right kinds of support.”

The Mind Equality Centre is the result of collaboration with the Northside Clinic, Darebin and Banyule Councils, the North Western PHN, Monash Health, Transgender Victoria and WorkingOUT, and is staffed by skilled professionals who know what it means to live in the LGBTIQ community.

“Key to the work we are doing is the establishment of strong relationships. We are already working closely with mainstream and other LGBTIQ-focused clinical services to establish strong pathways to

the centre, in particular, the gender dysphoria clinics and Primary Health Networks (PHNs). We also look forward to building links with other social services,” Ms Lawman said.

The Mind Equality Centre is located at 366 St Georges Road, North Fitzroy. People from any geographic location are welcome. The fee structure accommodates people with a range of financial situations.

In attendance and available for photos will be:

- The Victorian Minister for Mental Health: the Hon Martin Foley
- Queer comedian, musician and channel 10 TV personality: Jordan Raskopoulos

**For more information, to attend the opening, or arrange an interview please contact:  
Lisa Trent, Communications Manager on 0497 333 545 or 03 9455 7017**

Rosenstreich, G. (2011) LGBTI People Mental Health and Suicide. National LGBTI Health Alliance. Sydney

## **Mind. Who we are and what we do.**

Mind Australia Limited is a leading community-managed specialist mental health service provider. We have been supporting people dealing with the day-to-day impacts of mental illness, as well as their families, friends and carers for 40 years.

Currently we have over 60 service sites throughout Australia that, this year, will support 12,000 Australians on their personal recovery journeys.

We provide practical and motivational support that helps people to develop the skills they need to move on, thrive and improve the quality of their lives. This includes helping people with the things that make them feel strong and healthy, such as being in control of their life, being resilient and participating in their community.

We also work with people to address poverty, housing, education and employment. It is an approach to mental health and wellbeing that looks at the whole person in the context of their daily life. From our years of experience, we know that every individual’s journey to a life of meaning and purpose is a very personal one, which is why we are committed to providing the kind of flexibility in our support services that offers genuine choice and control.

Many of our support workers have been through their own recovery journey and faced similar challenges. They have a big input into the services we develop. Our services are also shaped by what service users and their families say they want.

We invest a lot in research about mental health recovery and psychosocial disability. Combined with the expertise of service users and their families, this enables us to make sure what we offer works and meets people’s needs. We also share this knowledge, providing training for peer workers and other mental health professionals.

We advocate for basic human rights for everyone; constantly challenging the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with mental health issues.