



**MHACA**  
Mental Health  
Association of  
Central Australia

---

# ANNUAL REPORT

2023 – 2024

---

# CONTENTS

**02**

Chairperson's Message  
/ CEO's Message

**04**

Governance

**06**

Strategic Plan

**08**

Year in Review

**11**

Participant Stories

**13**

Pathways to Recovery

**15**

Activities at the Centre

**18**

Housing and  
Homelessness Support

**21**

Health Promotion and  
Improving Wellbeing

**25**

Keeping Everyone Safe

**29**

NDIS Support Coordination

**32**

Central Australian Suicide  
Prevention Training Program

**34**

Mental Health Workforce

**36**

Treasurer's Message

The Mental Health Association of Central Australia would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the country on which we live and work, the Central Arrernte people, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

The Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) has offered psychosocial support services and health promotion programs aimed at enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of people living in Central Australia for more than 30 years.

We acknowledge people with a personal experience of mental health challenges and suicide, and the voices of lived experience inform the work that we do.

As an inclusive organisation we celebrate people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

I am delighted to present MHACA's Annual Report for 2023-24. This report showcases our achievements over the past year and celebrates the efforts of our outstanding team in delivering meaningful, high-quality, evidence-based programs to support the mental health and wellbeing of people living in Central Australia.

In February 2024, I stepped into the role of Chair of the MHACA Board. I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, Peter Riley, for his invaluable contribution to MHACA. Peter served on the board for seven years, including two years as Chair during which he supported the organisation through significant change and growth.

On behalf of the Board, I would also like to express our gratitude to CEO Dira Horne for her outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to MHACA. Dira's genuine care for the participants we support, as well as the respect she commands both within MHACA and the broader community speaks volumes about her approach and leadership style.

A significant milestone this year was the launch of MHACA's new Strategic Plan 2024-2027. This plan reaffirms our vision and mission, setting the direction for the next phase of our growth. We are excited to see this plan come to life and guide us in our ongoing work.

MHACA's commitment to continuous improvement and quality systems remains strong, ensuring our financial sustainability and the long-term viability of our services. Over the past year, we have made significant strides in enhancing our data and reporting capabilities, optimising our NDIS fee-for-service model and improving efficiencies. We also continue to uphold compliance with the National Mental Health Standards, QIC Health & Community Standards and the NDIS demonstrating our commitment to providing a safe and quality service for both our participants and staff.

MHACA's success is also built on the strong relationships we maintain with stakeholders from across the mental health and community services sector. I continue to be impressed by the reach and engagement of our health promotion team, our commitment to supporting our colleagues by providing quality education opportunities and the role MHACA

plays in bringing people together to support the mental health and wellbeing of the broader Central Australia community.

We were pleased to welcome Tobias Churchill and Neil Scholes-Robertson to the Board this year. We will be farewelling long-serving Board members Ali Thorn, Duncan Leggoe and Neil Scholes-Robertson. On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our gratitude to them for their dedication to MHACA and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

In closing, on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the hardworking and dedicated staff at MHACA who live out the vision, purpose, and values of our organisation each day. As you read through this report, I hope you take pride in the incredible work you do and the positive impact you have on the lives of those we support.

**Victoria Orpin**  
*Chairperson*



# CEO'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the Mental Health Association of Central Australia 2023-24 Annual Report. This year has been a testament to our resilience and commitment to advancing our Vision that all Central Australians are supported to achieve good mental health.

Our programs and services have continued to respond to the unique needs of our diverse community. We have been dismantling the stigma faced by many in our community living with mental health challenges by providing access to crucial mental health resources. We have worked diligently to break down barriers through collaboration and building supportive networks.

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with both gratitude and optimism for the incredible journey we've shared. Our achievements would not have been possible without the dedicated, talented and supportive team I have had the privilege to work with.

I wish to acknowledge the unwavering support of our dedicated Board of Directors, for bringing their skills and experience to the benefit of the organisation.

We sincerely thank our funders, community partners and our participants. Together, we are building a stronger, more resilient community where mental health is prioritised and ensuring that every individual has access to the supports they need.

**Dira Horne**  
*CEO*



# GOVERNANCE



**MHACA Board**

From left to right – Daniel Shane, Lavenia Saville, Mary Menotti, Duncan Leggoe, Toby Churchill and Victoria Orpin

## Board Members

- Victoria Orpin** – Chair
- Lavenia Saville** – Treasurer
- Mary Menotti** – Ordinary Member
- Ali Thorn** – Ordinary Member
- Toby Churchill** – Ordinary Member
- Duncan Leggoe** – Ordinary Member
- Stephanie Van-Son** – Ordinary Member
- Daniel Shane** – Ordinary Member
- Neil Scholes-Robertson** – Ordinary Member

MHACA is privileged to be guided by a dedicated and highly capable Board, under the remarkable leadership of our Chairperson, Victoria Orpin. This year, we farewelled Peter Riley and were pleased to welcome two new members, Toby Churchill and Neil Scholes-Robertson. We extend our deepest appreciation to all Board members for their generous commitment of time and expertise.

**166**  
people received a  
MHACA support service



**45**  
new participants



**49.40%**  
female participants

**50.60%**  
male participants

**3308**  
hours of one-on-one  
support provided



**20673**  
hours accessed at  
the Drop-in Centre

**5724**  
hours accessed of  
group activities

**40**  
health promotion  
events and  
presentations

**102**  
NDIS Coordination  
of Supports  
participants

**5445**  
hours of NDIS Coordination  
of Supports provided

**3345**  
event and stall  
engagements



**1420**  
Facebook  
page followers



**371**  
Instagram  
page followers



**1654**  
newsletter opens



**MHACA**  
Mental Health  
Association of  
Central Australia

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 – 2027

## VISION

All Central Australians are supported to achieve good mental health.

## PURPOSE

We support participants in their recovery and promote wellbeing in our community.

## VALUES

<b>BELONGING</b>	Connection, Relationships, Community, Collaboration
<b>HOPE</b>	Optimistic, Courage, Goals, Change
<b>RESPECT</b>	Listen, Kindness, Fairness, Inclusive
<b>HONESTY</b>	Trust, Integrity, Transparent, Accountable

### GOAL 1 - Build on our long history by always exploring ways to improve.

#### We will:

- Prioritise a strong and robust business.
- Work with the people who will help us achieve our goals.

#### We are successful When:

- Partnerships are in place with MOUs.
- A qualified Board is engaged with experience to govern effectively.
- Accreditation achieved against the National Standards.
- Cash reserves are strong and continual reinvestment is undertaken.

### GOAL 2 - We invest in our people and nurture a positive culture.

#### We will:

- Invest in leadership and strengthen succession planning.
- Strengthen the cultural capability and diversity of our workforce.
- Implement the Lived Experience Workforce Development Framework.

#### We are successful when:

- Participant feedback reflects a culturally safe and diverse workforce.
- 80% staff satisfaction reported in the annual staff survey.
- We retain a stable and engaged peer workforce.

### GOAL 3 - Employ best practices which support the participant's ideal outcome.

#### We will:

- Provide person-centred, recovery oriented and trauma-informed supports.
- Ensure coordination and integration with other healthcare providers.
- Include participants and carers in planning, service delivery and evaluation.

#### We are successful when:

- 60% of participants engage in the Your Experience Survey (YES), and 75% of participants express service satisfaction.
- Participants report satisfaction with coordinated care through feedback.
- Our service delivery and activities reflect the expressed input from participants.

### GOAL 4 - Encourage help-seeking to increase wellbeing.

#### We will:

- Normalise mental health challenges and articulate supports that are available.
- Develop culturally appropriate resources.
- Build capacity to respond to people experiencing a crisis through suicide prevention training.

#### We are successful when:

- There is increased engagement on our social media, website and health promotion stalls.
- We receive positive community feedback about our resources and community events.
- 250 Central Australians each year have received accredited mental health training.

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The year has been one of challenges, growth, and positive achievements for the Mental Health Association of Central Australia. The positive strides we've made have not been without challenges. Funding constraints, increasing costs and the additional resources and time to meet national standards and accreditation, reflects the broader economic pressures faced by the not-for-profit sector and community at large.

Staff recruitment also remains a challenge at a time when negative media attention on Alice Springs has been ongoing. MHACA continues to promote positive stories about the great work that happens here in Central Australia and the benefits of living in our beautiful town.

We have focused our efforts on investing in necessary technology and resources to enhance our operations. We have begun the implementation of an integrated compliance software system called Folio that will assist us in managing our risks and incidents and, in the future, will help manage staff supervision and training.

The previous investment in Lumary, a client management system, has seen an increase in efficiency in NDIS data recording and streamlining of financial processes.

We have had strong representation in the community through the Health Promotion and Central Australian Suicide Prevention Training teams who have been providing vital mental health training and education.

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy - Northern Territory, Dira Horne (MHACA), Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler MP, Peter Riley (MHACA) and Marion Scrymgour MP visited MHACA in September.



## HIGHLIGHTS

### Drop-in Centre Funding

MHACA successfully secured additional funding from the Northern Territory Primary Health Network to help fund the work in the Drop-in Centre.

The Drop-in Centre is a safe space for MHACA participants, some of whom don't have many other options for where to go. It supports approximately 30 participants each day, however, any of MHACA's 180 participants are welcome to utilise the space as they need.

"For me personally, it really has been so helpful having a place to drop in to. I have never had access to a Drop-in Centre before and I've lived in a number of places in Queensland and around Australia. I love being able to come and make a coffee, and there are great facilities including showers, washing machines, computers and food to eat. I don't use all of these services but for the people who need them I am sure it is a blessing." Culey, MHACA Participant.

The funding will support the Drop-in Centre until December 2024.

### Accreditation Achievements

This year MHACA received full accreditation against the NDIS Practice Standards and passed the Mid-term review of the QIC Health and Community Standards and the National Mental Health Standards.

Maintaining these national accreditations is important and MHACA is committed to delivering quality services to our participants. However, there is a significant amount of work required in collating evidence and data and keeping up to date with recent legislation and changes in standards, particularly with the NDIS.

MHACA will be investing further resources in the Quality Team in the next financial year to meet these increased demands.



Participants and staff meeting at MHACA's Drop-in Centre September.

organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and people with a lived or living experience of suicide and mental health challenges. More than 70 people attended the forum.

## Collaborations

We actively seek to strengthen our partnerships with other organisations in our community and collaborate wherever possible. We want to ensure that a comprehensive and cohesive approach to supporting participants in their recovery remains at the forefront of our work.

Some key partnerships in the last year have been with:

- The Northern Territory Department of Health
- Northern Territory Primary Health Network
- Suicide Prevention Australia
- Mental Health Services Central Australian Region
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- headspace Alice Springs
- Multicultural Services of Central Australia
- Community Housing Central Australia

Minister for Health; Remote Housing and Homelands; Parks and Rangers; Local Decision Making; Mental Health and Suicide Prevention; Public Employment; and Corporate and Digital Development Selena Uibo visited MHACA in January.

### Central Australian Suicide Prevention Forum

Delivering the Suicide Prevention Forum was another significant achievement in the last financial year. The Forum has become one of the key learning and networking opportunities for people in the mental health and social services sector in Central Australia.

A driving force behind the success of this forum was the partnership with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Social Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Program, the Culture Care Connect Suicide Prevention Program and headspace Alice Springs.

The forum brought together a diverse group of people with an interest in suicide prevention including people working in mental health and community service provision, Aboriginal community-controlled



MHACA was represented on the following networks and committees:

- NT Mental Health Coalition Board
- Suicide Prevention Australia NT Committee
- Alice Springs Homelessness Reference Group
- Alice Springs Accommodation Action group
- Alice Springs Mental Health Professionals Interagency
- Central Australia Life Promotion Network
- International Women's Day Event Committee
- 16 Days of Activism Against Gendered Based Violence
- Alice Springs Town Council All Abilities Network

## Dira Horne

CEO

Nicole Pietsch (MHACA), Hellen Webster (headspace), Rosemary Wanganeen (Healing Centre for Griefology), Jessica McAdam (headspace) and Reece Cossar (Central Australian Aboriginal Congress) at the Suicide Prevention Forum 2024 at Desert Park Alice Springs.



---

**'We actively seek to strengthen our partnerships with other organisations in our community and collaborate wherever possible.'**

---

# MANDY'S STORY

I started coming to MHACA 10 years ago through a referral from another service in town. It was very easy to access MHACA, I did an intake interview and started coming right after to all week and weekend activities, it was just walking distance from my place. The staff members were welcoming and friendly and made the Drop-in Centre feel like a safe space like it still is today.

My favourite activity at MHACA has got to be Healthy Cooking. Growing up, my mum would only give us microwaved food, so it was very bland food with no taste. I love the Healthy Cooking activity because I'm re-learning how to cook healthier and fresher food.

I also access NDIS Coordination of Supports at MHACA. My COS worker helps me manage my NDIS plan. She has been helping me book my driving lessons. I also have a one-on-one support worker who takes me shopping during the week and helps me with other things.

I often step up to do some things at MHACA. Back in 2018, I joined the MHACA peer program where participants who were involved worked one day a week at the Drop-in Centre welcoming and supporting other participants. I have also helped at MHACA's health promotion stall at the Stress Less in the Park community event a couple of times. I have been in about 5 interview panels where I got to ask questions to the interviewees to see what they would do in some potential scenarios.

# JUAN'S STORY

I have been a participant at MHACA for about 8 years. I first heard about MHACA when I got the Monthly Activities Calendar in the mail and thought it could be a place where I could come and spend my days.

It was easy to start coming to MHACA's Drop-in Centre and the weekly activities. I met people and made friends



I am also the chairperson at the monthly staff and participant meetings. I feel appreciated for my work.

I enjoy coming to MHACA because it is a safe and welcoming environment. Staff members make sure everyone is ok, they really care and are empathetic. Respect and friendships with other participants are very important to me, it's all about the connections with each other. MHACA is very inclusive, people are mindful of others' personal and cultural boundaries.

My hope for the future is to resume my studies for the Certificate in Mental Health at Charles Darwin University next year, I still have another 12 months to go. I would like to give back to the Alice Springs community for all the help I received through my mental health journey. I also want to help young people and make sure they feel safe and welcome. It's all about helping others who are going through the same I have gone through. Hopefully, they can relate to my story and let me support them through their story.

**Mandy**



when I arrived. The staff were friendly and some of them are still working at MHACA so it is good to keep on seeing them every day.

I do some MHACA activities every week like cooking on Mondays. I like sports like basketball and football on Wednesdays. I also go to the Men's Yarning Circle on Fridays, we go for drives and it is good to get out with the group. MHACA activities are fun and good to attend.

I access NDIS Coordination of Supports with MHACA too. My support coordinator asks me what I like doing and helps me do those things. She helped me to sign up to play in a bowling competition. We made a team with another MHACA participant and started playing doubles. We are in 5th place so far and it ends in

# SALLY'S STORY

My first interaction with MHACA was 10 years ago through a referral from the hospital after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder. MHACA was located at their old building on Hartley Street back then, it had a cozy space in that old building. It was easy to access MHACA and it was exactly what I needed at the time so I became a regular participant.

I kept accessing one-on-one supports in the community and had wonderful MHACA support workers. I don't think I had any breaks with support workers during the years, so MHACA has been really good for me. I play the harp and sing, so I played at the opening of the new building several years ago when MHACA moved to East Side.

I also receive MHACA services through NDIS Coordination of Supports. It is great having a NDIS plan with which I can support my online music teachers doing singing and harp, and regular house cleanings. I am also going to start counselling and taking computer skills lessons soon.

But apart from those online classes, I felt I needed someone supporting me here in town. I started asking the Coordination of Supports team at MHACA to put me in contact with someone who could help me with my music projects. So one day the Coordination Supports manager organised a meeting with local musician Dan the Underdog and it has been working out really well ever since. He supports me with my sound recording, my opera, singing and playing the harp.

December. I enjoy competing and have a good time in the afternoon.

I like the participants and staff at MHACA. The Drop-in is good for me - I can rest, play games, and watch TV and movies.

I have two jobs at the moment, I work at K-mart and at another place. I like working and it is good to have my own money.

I want to get my own place in the future, with a bed, TV and a car because I just started taking driving lessons.

## Juan



Dan the Underdog and I made a song together called Lascia Ch'io Pianga (Here Let My Tears Flow) about the parallelism between what happens with me inside, my own personal struggles, and what happens with the kids in town. I asked him if he could add a rap about the kids in town. Through my life journey I was always told what to do and no one asked me what I wanted to do. No one is asking the kids what they want to do or what they want to see happening.

We did other collaborations - a song he wrote about his brother, a version of The Holy Night, and 'Song to the Moon' which I wrote about my mother in which Dan added a rap too. Dan has been a great support for me, creating music together through the good and bad times. He challenges me and pushes me artistically. More than a support worker, it's like a constant collaboration. We are a very good team, we are very blessed.

## Sally

# PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY

Pathways to Recovery program is a psychosocial and recovery-focused program that provides support to people living with mental health challenges in Central Australia. The program's main focus is to help participants access appropriate supports to live in a safe and secure environment and remain independent in the community.

Pathways staff members work alongside participants to develop and implement their recovery plans which support their goals and aspirations. Recovery looks different for each participant - support workers need to build a rapport with participants and get to know their strengths and challenges. We support them in building up their strengths and help them to work through their challenges so they can have a better quality of life.

Each participant requires different supports depending on what their goals and needs are. Supports can include:

- advocating on behalf of participants
- assisting with living skills development
- home visits
- shopping
- assistance to engage in group activities at MHACA and in the community
- attending appointments
- linking participants up with other service providers

Riccardo, a MHACA participant, had mentioned how he struggled to go to doctor appointments when he was feeling physically sick. 'I have been avoiding the doctor for years because I didn't want to know what was wrong with me'. His support worker explained the importance of looking after his physical health as well as his mental health. He then started attending his doctor appointments, having relevant tests done and is now receiving the appropriate treatments. Riccardo mentioned he feels much healthier since receiving the treatments he needs. He has learned to look after himself better and understands the importance of seeing a doctor when he's not feeling well.

Corey does some painting in MHACA's Drop-in Centre.





We are currently supporting 25 participants under the Pathways program. 13 participants are receiving one-on-one support and 12 participants attend MHACA's Drop-in Centre and group activities.

We support people with and without NDIS plans. We receive funding from the Northern Territory Government which allows us to continue to support participants who do not have a NDIS plan.

### Christine Boocock

*Programs Manager*

A MHACA participant had decided to leave Alice Springs but was really concerned about not having access to the same supports she had received from MHACA. With the assistance of her support worker, she developed a moving town plan which included looking at what services were available in the new town for people with mental health challenges. Together, they researched services in the area she was moving to and contacted some services to find out more information and how the referral process worked. After this, she felt more positive and less stressed out about moving interstate.

MHACA staff and participants at the Christmas lunch.



"I really appreciate the weekly one-on-one support I receive. Knowing my support worker is coming to help me, keeps me motivated to attend my appointments and to do my food shopping so I eat healthy and keep myself well."

**MHACA Participant.**



A Fun Exercise session delivered by Lucinda from ReLink Australia

# ACTIVITIES AT THE CENTRE

The MHACA Drop-in Centre offers a welcoming space where people can relax and feel at home. To access all MHACA services people have an intake interview, and once they become a participant they can access the centre.

The Drop-in Centre is open weekdays and participants can access tea and coffee, food, hot showers, laundry facilities, computers and spaces to relax. Some of our participants may not have access to these in their daily life.

The Day Program has had a busy year with various activities and events which are part of MHACA's monthly Group Activities Calendar. The calendar provides participants with a snapshot of up-and-coming community events that MHACA will participate in as well as activities chosen by the participants themselves.

The activities include:

- Healthy Cooking
- Pickleball
- Men's Yarning Circle
- Swimming
- Basketball
- Craft

- Music Connection
- Fun Exercise
- Hearing Voices Group

MHACA activities have a therapeutic focus and are facilitated by people with lived experience and qualified facilitators to provide participants with a safe and comfortable space.

The Men's Yarning Group is popular for numerous reasons. Participants often go out bush, and enjoy having a yarn whilst having a BBQ or going for a walk.



Music Connection activity at MHACA's Drop-in Centre on a Friday morning.

Maurice getting a haircut at MHACA's Participant Wellbeing Day



The Craft Group is held each Thursday providing a calm relaxing space to sit and connect with oneself or others while creating something unique. This year's crafts included basket weaving, macrame, clay making, jewellery making, rock painting and collaging.

Every Friday we have 'Music Connections' with Alison, a session that's always a hit with both participants and staff. Our motto is Loud & Proud and captures the energy as we belt out songs, gearing up for the weekend with lively tunes and uplifting vibes.

Pickleball is one of the most recent additions to the MHACA activity calendar. This is hosted at The Y by Pickleball Alice Springs. MHACA has some regular attendees who are always keen to get involved in a healthy competition against each other. All of them have improved a lot since first trying this fast-growing sport and have been invited to attend the Yeperenye Pickleball Championships at the Marion Centre in August.

The day program team actively ensures that there is something different happening each day.

## MHACA Participant Camp

MHACA organised the MHACA Participant Camp from 28 to 30 May at Ross River Resort.

Ross River Resort was the perfect location to host the camp as it had excellent facilities and we had the entire campground to ourselves. It included a bunkhouse with 10 rooms that accommodated everyone except for a couple of participants who chose to sleep outside in their swags for a better view of the stars. The resort also featured an industrial kitchen and a large room where breakfast was served each morning.

Daily walks from the campground across the riverbed were beautiful and provided a bit of exercise.

Games and activities were planned by a MHACA participants' working group. These included card games, dice games, giant Jenga, cricket, tether tennis, and 8-ball at the Ross River Resort homestead. Tamara, MHACA's craft facilitator, hosted a rock painting session, and Alison, MHACA's music facilitator, led a jam and sing-along session around the fire where some participants shared great rock and reggae tunes in their languages.

The two-day menu varied between burgers or fish and chips at the homestead for lunch, a delicious butter chicken on the first night, and one of our staff members alongside some participants mastered the cooking of 12 kangaroo tails and potatoes in the fire on the second night.

It poured down on the last morning making packing up and driving out of the campground a bit challenging, but we managed with a few logistical tweaks.

The camp fostered participants' wellbeing and connection with nature and community. It was a fun and wholesome experience in a warm, relaxing, and inclusive environment. We look forward to the 2025 edition!

## Footy 4 Life

Footy 4 Life is a program organised by AFL Northern Territory (AFLNT) for people of all abilities. This was the third year MHACA supported participants to attend every Wednesday as part of our Healthy Bodies Support Healthy Minds Strategy.

The program offers an inclusive environment that uses football to improve physical and mental health. It provides participants with the opportunity to exercise, foster emotional wellbeing, connect with others and be part of a community. The weekly sessions at Traeger Park involve kicking as many goals as possible in a set number of minutes, tackling obstacles, handball exercises, and lots of encouragement between players and coaches!

This year, MHACA participants were responsible for cooking a barbecue every few weeks and they took the job seriously making sure to feed all the hungry players.

Participants also had the opportunity to meet some Melbourne Football Club players at a meet-and-greet morning before the AFL Premiership Match in June.

Footy 4 Life is the weekly highlight of everyone who attends the program and MHACA is looking forward to joining again next year!

### Helen Chadwick

Day Program Coordinator

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

**'I like all the activities at MHACA but bowling and cinema are my favourites.'**

**'I enjoy MHACA's music activity because I can practice playing guitar and sing with other participants.'**

MHACA participant Nola with Melbourne Football Club player at a Footy 4 Life Program meet and greet.



MHACA participants at an 8ball session at Club East Side.



MHACA Swimming activity at the Alice Springs Aquatic Centre



# HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

MHACA's housing and homelessness programs are essential in supporting people with mental health challenges who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Alice Springs.

Participants receive help to secure suitable housing and to learn the skills needed to maintain stable long-term tenancies. The housing and homelessness support team works closely with participants and collaborates with other community service organisations to meet the participants needs. Participants can also get supports from other MHACA programs simultaneously.

Housing and homelessness support is delivered through two MHACA programs; Housing and Psychosocial Support Program (HAPSP) and Tenancy Support Program (TSP).

Participants are taught skills to maintain long-term stable tenancies, are supported to find appropriate housing, linked to other services for mental health treatment and psychosocial support.

Housing and homelessness support is delivered through two MHACA programs; Tenancy Support Program (TSP) and Housing and Psychosocial Support Program (HAPSP).

## Housing and Psychosocial Support Program (HPSP)

MHACA Housing and Psychosocial Support program provides support to participants with mental health challenges who are struggling to maintain their tenancies in public, community and private housing.

Participants in the program can be referred from the Central Australia Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Department of Territory Families Housing and Community (DTFHC), primary health care or self-referred. MHACA HPSP works collaboratively with other support services in Alice Springs to help participants maintain safe and secure homes.

Participants are supported to learn practical skills such as:

- keeping the housing clean and tidy
- paying tenancy bills on time
- reducing electricity and water bills
- understanding tenancy rights and responsibilities
- managing visitors
- reducing damages
- reporting maintenance issues.

Participants are also supported to access deep cleaning services for their house, pest control, financial support to buy white goods and pay outstanding gas bills.

## Good Outcomes

**18** participants accessed the program. Out of these,

**9** exited the program successfully as their goals were achieved. Only one participant was unsuccessful as she moved interstate.

**4** participants residing in transitional housing improved their homes maintenance standards and managed to bring their tenancy bills up to date.

**1** participant accessed NT Shelter support to buy white goods.

**2** participants were supported to move into public housing and transitional housing.

## Tenancy Support Program (TSP)

The Tenancy Support Program (TSP) supports people with mental health challenges experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in the Alice Springs area. For those people without a home, we offer support to find appropriate housing. For those who are already accommodated but are at risk of homelessness due to life challenges, the TSP workers support them to learn skills to maintain long-term stable tenancies.

The TSP continues to collaborate with other services in Alice Springs to support participants in achieving their recovery plan goals. Participants are supported to access:

- alcohol and other drugs services
- emergency relief
- financial counselling
- domestic and family violence support
- emergency accommodation
- transitional housing
- public housing
- mental health services
- community connection
- occupational therapist assessments.



## DAVID'S STORY

### I now have a roof over my head

'I never thought my life was going to change for the better. A year ago, I was staying in transitional housing accommodation in a one-bedroom unit. There were people consuming drugs and alcohol at that unit block and my neighbor bullied me. I did not feel safe at all. My mental health deteriorated, and I ended up being admitted to a mental health ward at Alice Springs Hospital for about 3 months. I was discharged to Alice Springs Sub-Acute and stayed there for a year.

Whilst at Sub-Acute I gave up my transitional housing unit as I did not want to go back. I was then referred to MHACA's Housing and Psychosocial Support Program for support to get my own safe and stable home. My HPSP support worker advocated on my behalf with our local Public Housing Department and I was fortunate to get this unit where I live now located in a safe unit complex.

I now feel safe and my mental health is stable. Thanks to MHACA and other services in Alice Springs I now have a roof over my head.

If you need help ask for help, if you get help say Thank You.'

David cooking at his new unit

## Good Outcomes

This financial year a total of **67** participants accessed the program.

Out of these, **38** participants exited the programs for various reasons including achieving their support plan goals.

### Edson Chigaba

Housing and Homelessness Manager



## MONA LISA'S STORY

### My life is back on track

'Back in 2022, my life was not going well. It was hard for me to look after myself and connect with friends and family. I moved into a one-bedroom unit at Community Housing Central Australia (CHCA) transitional housing program. I struggled to keep my unit clean and was afraid of losing my unit and ending up sleeping in the creek.

After failing my unit inspection, CHCA staff were very helpful and referred me to MHACA.

MHACA Tenancy Support Program worker visited me, sat down with me and listened to my story. We agreed on a plan to look after my unit better, improve my social life and manage my mental health. MHACA and CHCA worked together and supported me to get a cleaning kit and to get my unit deep cleaned.

I now receive the supports I need to feel better and attend MHACA group activities and Drop-in Centre.

I recently moved into my own long-term public housing unit. I am happy I got help from people who listened to my story and gave me hope in life.'

Mona Lisa and MHACA staff member Cheryl Lewin at the front of Mona Lisa's house.

# HEALTH PROMOTION AND IMPROVING WELLBEING

Health promotion focuses on improving the overall health and wellbeing of individuals and communities by empowering them to make healthy choices.

In mental health, health promotion seeks to establish supportive environments that foster emotional wellbeing, encourage healthy lifestyles that can prevent illness, and diminish the stigma attached to mental health concerns.

In the 2022-2027 period MHACA's Health Promotion work has four targeted goals:

- Reduce stigma of mental ill health and suicide and encourage help seeking in the Central Australian community.
- Build capacity in the community services sector to respond to people experiencing mental health difficulties.

- Support sector communication on suicide and promote suicide prevention resources.
- Promote lifestyle interventions to support mental health and wellbeing.

MHACA continues to make a strong impact in the Central Australian Region. We maintain a strong online presence through social media, and mental health advertising campaigns on television, radio and local newspaper.

In the last year MHACA developed and printed 2 new resources:

- Schizophrenia and Hearing Voices Flyer
- A helplines magnet for young people

Caption of MHACA's Good Food Helps Good Thinking animation



## Good Food Supports Good Thinking Animation

MHACA developed a new animation for First Nations community members – Good Food Supports Good Thinking. It explores how we can support our wellbeing through healthy eating. The animation has been translated into Arrernte language and can be found on the MHACA website.

## Collaboration

Collaboration continues to be at the centre of MHACA's health promotion efforts as we are constantly seeking for opportunities to partner with other organisations and build capacity in our local sector.

Over the last year, we facilitated 12 meetings across two professional networks - the Alice Springs Mental Health Professionals Interagency and the Central Australia Life Promotion Network with a total of 195 attendees.



**Support for young people & family**

**headspace Alice Springs**  
08 8958 4544 [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

**Kids Helpline**  
1800 55 1800 [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

**Reach Out**  
[au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

**Parent Line**  
1300 30 1300 [parentline.com.au](http://parentline.com.au)



MHACA held a health promotion stall at the MacDonald Regional Council Healthy Communities event at Ntaria (Hermannsburg)

Carly Kennedy from Northern Territory Government facilitated the hairspray station at the Heads Up Youth Wellbeing event at the Alice Springs Convention Centre.

Heads Up magnet with mental health helplines for young people and their carers.



## Community Engagement Events

MHACA continues to work in partnership with other organisations and wherever possible promote help-seeking for mental health challenges. We facilitated and participated in 40 local events with approximately 3,345 community engagements.

Event highlights include:

- MacDonnell Regional Council Healthy Communities events – MHACA held a health promotion stall at Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Utju (Areyonga), Amoonguna, Titjikala and Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) remote community events. We had great conversations with community members about how to look after our mental health and handed out wellbeing bags with some self-care items.
- Heads Up Youth Wellbeing event - MHACA planned, organised and delivered the first edition of the event at the Alice Springs Convention Centre in partnership with headspace Alice Springs. 350 young people

from local schools attended and learnt about how to support their wellbeing. There was live music, speakers, face painting and workshops. 10 local organisations hosted stalls. The event was nominated for Community Event of the Year at the Awards Ceremony at the Alice Springs Town Council on 26 January.

- 'Business at Sunset'. MHACA hosted a successful Chamber of Commerce Business at Sunset in June. About 50 people attended the event and heard about our services and programs, especially the Central Australia Suicide Prevention Training Program.

## Presentations and Workshops

Throughout the year MHACA delivered 2 Mental Health in the Workplace Workshops to the Alice Springs Town Council staff members.

Other presentations included:

- 'Mental Health Supports for Parents' presentation at the 'Parents Forum Alice Springs 2024' by Two Two One Mental Health Charity at the Mercure Alice Springs Resort.

# STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

'MHACA's health promotion animations are good and important and it feels like family talking to you.'

*Rhonda Inkamala, Culture and Language Consultant at Yirara Collage*

'Thank you for all your efforts, activities, and wonderful engagement at our Community BBQ's, it really made a difference to the events and got the Community thinking and talking about ways to keep Community strong, a fantastic effort on your behalf and very much appreciated.'

*Nick Chandler, Larapinta Valley Community Centre Coordinator.*

'Heads Up Youth Wellbeing Event aimed to provide a supportive and engaging platform for young minds to tackle stress and build essential skills for a brighter future. It was a day filled with workshops, interactive sessions, and valuable networking opportunities. The goal being to empower students to manage stress, enhance their emotional wellbeing, and develop essential life skills. The students had overwhelmingly positive feedback about the day.'

*Tammy Hawkins, Deputy Principal St. Philips College.*

- Presentation to the Lhere Artepe Day Patrol Group on mental health awareness and suicide prevention brief interventions. 16 attendees.
- 'Building the Lived Experience Workforce' presentation at the Desert Knowledge Australia Knowledge Intersections Symposium. The symposium had approximately 60 attendees and heard from a range of local organisations about research and innovation.
- Presentation at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre as part of the NAAJA Kunga's Program on mental health awareness and suicide prevention brief interventions. 11 attendees.
- Alice Springs Town Council Men's Minds Matter program pilot. Presentation about how keeping a healthy diet and getting enough sleep can impact our mental health and overall wellbeing. 5 men attended.
- Presentation at the NT Dual Diagnosis Network conference about MHACA services.

## Nicole Pietsch

*Senior Manager Health Promotion and Quality*

MHACA teamed up with Tjanpi Desert Weavers to offer weaving workshops during Mental Health Week.



# KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

MHACA is committed to keeping people safe in Central Australia. We facilitate conversations about suicide prevention in our community and play an active role in network and strategy discussions.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to drive up mental health and suicide risk factors across Australia. Promotion of support services available has been a strong focus for MHACA, as well as delivering suicide prevention training and workshops.

## The Keeping Everyone Safe NT Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan 2023-2028

The Keeping Everyone Safe NT Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan was launched at World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10 by Minister Lauren Moss and provides a renewed focus on suicide prevention in the Northern Territory.

MHACA was actively engaged in the community consultation process for the new plan and advocated for the new plan to be called "Keeping Everyone Safe."

"Keeping Everyone Safe" was Sabella Kngwarraye Turner, Cultural Lead at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, interpretation of the word 'suicide' as there is no direct translation in Arrernte language. MHACA suggested the use of this title to NTG/NT PHN/AMSANT to make the plan feel more accessible to all NT community members.

MHACA attended the Keeping Everyone Safe Plan launch, and Nicole Pietsch from MHACA and Jordan Pierce from Lifeline Central Australia both spoke about local suicide prevention initiatives.

## Central Australia Life Promotion Network

MHACA has been facilitating a local suicide prevention network since 1999. The network enables important information to be shared to stakeholders and local engagement in critical suicide prevention initiatives. In the last year there were 5 meetings with approximately 90 attendees.

- July 2023. Guest presentation: Toby Dawson, Director Memberships & Engagement, Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA). What is SPA and how can Central Australian community members connect with the work of the organisation.
- September 2023. Special guest speaker for World Suicide Prevention Day. Paul Norton, Clinical Nurse Manager Community and CATT teams, Central Australia Health Service, discussed what supports people can receive when they present with a mental health/suicidal crisis.
- November 2023. This meeting focused on discussing the Keeping Everyone Safe Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan 2023-2028.
- February 2024. This meeting discussed Action Area 3 of the Keeping Everyone Safe NT Suicide Prevention Implementation Plan and heard an update about the TRISP suicide prevention initiatives funded by the NT PHN. The meeting also heard about the impact of the No results in the referendum.
- April 2024. Life Promotion Network Meeting. Guest Speaker: Yvette Nicholls, A/Executive Director, Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch. Provided an update on the work of the Suicide Prevention Team at NT Health.

Members of the network who attended meetings represented a range of organisations including: Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet, NT Department of Health, NT Primary Health Network, Suicide Prevention Australia, MacDonnell Regional Council, AMSANT, Aboriginal Liaison Unit Alice Springs Hospital, Royal Flying Doctor Service, NPY Women's Council, NT Mental Health Coalition, Mission Australia, Mental Health Services Central Australia, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, headspace Alice Springs, NT Health Advisory Group, Standby, MATES

Construction, Wesley Mission, Lifeline Central Australia, Disability Advocacy Service, Sexual Assault Referral Centre, National Wellbeing Alliance, Sabrina's Reach for Life, Marigold Therapy.

## Central Australia Suicide Prevention Forum

On 21-22 May, a diverse group of 70 people came together for the "Supporting Our Communities" Central Australian Suicide Prevention Forum at the Alice Springs Desert Park.

The forum focused on lived experience and how we can better support people and families in crisis. Speakers included: Pip Williams – Lived Experience Advocate and Peer Support Worker, Aunty's Place – Karen Moyle, Perfectly Imperfect Consulting, Post Traumatic Growth - Lidia Di Lembo, Sabrina's Reach For Life, Becoming more culturally responsive and trauma

informed – Rosie Schubert, Ngarla Kunoth Monks, AMSANT, Central Australia Suicide Prevention Training Program – Lynn Moloney, Linda Carpenter, MHACA, Suicide Prevention in the Northern Territory – Shaun Wilson, NT Health, TRISP Initiatives – Simon Casey, NTPHN, NT Chief Psychiatrist – David Mitchell, Culture Care Connect – Jesy James Carr, Reece Cossar, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, 13 YARN – Marjorie Anderson, Headspace Alice Springs – Dr Sophie Hunt, Jessica McAdam, Alison Cunynghame – Lived Experience Advocate.

There were also two panels as part of the event: 'Supporting First Nation's Lived Experiences' and 'Supporting People and Families in Crisis' and a full-day workshop with Rosemary Wanganeen, founder of the Healing Centre for Griefology. There was also a guided meditation with NPY Women's Council.

The event was organised by the Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) with the support of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Wesley Mission, and the Northern Territory Government. See the short social media video from the forum at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGsjlazBNRw>



Nicole Pietsch (MHACA), Jordan Pierce (Lifeline), Minister Lauren Moss and community members at the Keeping Everyone Safe Plan launch on World Suicide Prevention Day.

## Suicide Prevention Australia NT Committee

In the last year MHACA became the Chair of the Suicide Prevention Australia NT Committee after the development of the committee to ensure greater representation from Territorians in national suicide prevention discussions.

Nicole Pietsch, Senior Manager for Health Promotion and Quality attended the Suicide Prevention Australia National Conference in Adelaide in May and delivered a presentation "Alice Springs – More than Bad Media. Suicide Prevention in a Remote Context."

### Nicole Pietsch

Senior Manager Health Promotion and Quality

National Suicide Prevention Conference – Nicole Pietsch, Senior Manager Health Promotion and Quality presented at the NSPC in Adelaide.

Attendees at the Central Australian Suicide Prevention Forum at the Alice Springs Desert Park in May.



...mental health or suicide prevention sector in Central Australia...  
 ...however a larger social services sector, where staff could play a critical role in early intervention and referrals.  
 Critical staffing shortages are impacting mental health services and all service delivery in our region. Post COVID and the recent negative national media attention on Alice Springs, staff recruitment is a huge challenge.  
 Programs that might not be considered as mental health or suicide prevention services are doing important suicide prevention work in our community eg. youth programs, men's programs, remote community safety services, Arrernte Community Boxing Academy etc. National and Territory based funding decisions do not always reach these important on the ground programs.

# SCHIZOPHRENIA AND HEARING VOICES

Schizophrenia is a common mental health condition that can affect people's thinking, emotions, perceptions and behaviour. Up to one in 100 people will experience schizophrenia worldwide.

Imagine going out for coffee and sitting too close to other people and you can hear them talking – that's what schizophrenia can be like. Sometimes it is difficult to be around people and hard to focus.

How it affects people can vary a lot. Some people can make a full recovery. For others, it is a lifetime condition.

A study shows that one in 10 people can hear voices. Hearing voices or having intrusive thoughts can be a symptom of Schizophrenia, however not all people who hear voices have the condition.

Schizophrenia is treatable, and with the right supports people can lead full and meaningful lives.

A key thing to remember is that people who hear voices or have intrusive thoughts are everyday people who are trying to do the best that they can.

## For More Information:

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/schizophrenia>

<https://www.sane.org/information-and-resources/the-sane-blog/wellbeing/self-help-when-hearing-voices>

# HEARING VOICES GROUP

The Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) is a community based mental health organisation which supports people with a range of mental health conditions, including schizophrenia.

MHACA runs the Hearing Voices Group every Thursday from 10am to 12pm at our Drop-in Centre in East Side, Alice Springs. It is a safe and understanding support group for voice hearers or people who experience intrusive thoughts.

The Hearing Voices group sessions assist participants in managing their symptoms. There is open sharing of personal experiences and the group explores a range of support strategies. Guided by the principles of Recovery Oriented Practice and supported by facilitators with lived experience, group members collaboratively decide on the activities for each session.

## About The Group:



Open to all adults



Small group (up to 8 participants)



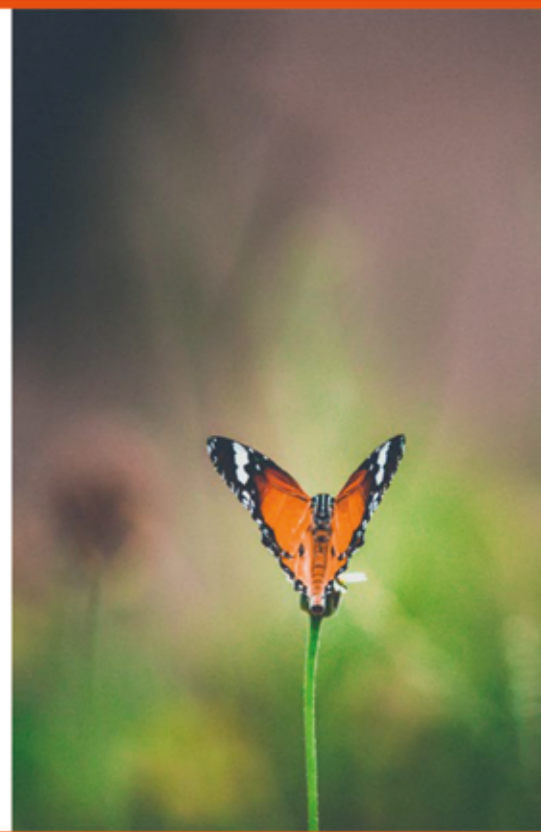
Morning tea provided



Monthly group social outings



Pick-ups and drop-offs available





# NDIS SUPPORT COORDINATION

MHACA is a Registered NDIS provider of Support Coordination and a Specialist Mental Health Support Coordination provider to people living with mental health challenges in Central Australia.

Support Coordination plays a critical role in participant recovery empowering them to navigate and make the most of their NDIS plans. This service is not just about connecting participants to services but about truly understanding their unique circumstances, mental health challenges, and personal goals.

Participants receive tailored guidance to access the right mix of supports whether that means finding appropriate housing options, connecting to therapeutic services, or identifying social and community activities that can improve their overall wellbeing.

At MHACA Support Coordination and Specialist Support Coordination serve distinct purposes in helping participants access the right support while managing complex mental health conditions.

Support Coordination focuses on building participants' ability to manage their own supports over time. It's about supporting individuals to understand their NDIS plans, make informed decisions, and coordinate their day-to-day supports in ways that align with their personal goals.

The aim is to develop long-term capacity and confidence encouraging self-advocacy and autonomy. Whether it's navigating the complexities of the NDIS, organising funding for a new service, or managing critical life transitions, Support Coordination is about providing the guidance and tools needed to overcome barriers and achieve stability.

Specialist Support Coordination is designed for participants with more complex needs or who experience significant challenges such as psychosocial disabilities. This level of support goes beyond standard coordination to offer a more intensive and hands-on approach.

Specialist Support Coordinators (SSCs) at MHACA have advanced expertise in mental health and complex care systems. They work with participants who face multiple barriers such as homelessness, high levels of behavioural support or critical mental health crisis, to ensure their plans are effectively implemented. The SSCs also liaise closely with clinicians, legal representatives, and other stakeholders to address any

risks and ensure participant safety.

Together, these levels of support coordination provide support from empowering individuals to take control of their lives to managing more complex scenarios with specialist expertise. MHACA remains committed to providing personalised comprehensive services that address both immediate needs and long-term goals to ensure participants are supported in every step of their recovery journey.

## SUPPORTING OVER 100 PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

This year, MHACA's Support Coordination team provided crucial support to over 100 participants helping them access the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and navigating their plans. The team also extended its services to participants' families, ensuring they could also access necessary supports under the NDIS when required. This comprehensive assistance has empowered both participants and their families improving their overall quality of life and ability to engage with services that promote mental health recovery and independence.

## Return-to-Country Trips

The Support Coordination team has played an important role in organising return-to-country trips for participants who needed to attend important cultural ceremonies in their communities. These trips were made possible by implementing proper supports and conducting critical risk assessments to ensure participants could safely reconnect with their cultural roots. By facilitating these trips, MHACA has supported participants in maintaining their cultural identity as a key factor in fostering their wellbeing and personal resilience.

## Supported Independent Living and Specialised Disability Accommodation

Another significant achievement has been the successful transition of numerous participants from environments with minimal active care to 24/7 Supported Independent Living arrangements. This shift ensures that participants receive continuous care tailored to their specific needs. Additionally, MHACA secured NDIS funding for two participants to move into Specialised Disability Accommodation which provides an appropriate environment for their long-term care and wellbeing. These transitions have marked important milestones in the participants' lives providing them with the stability and support they need for sustained mental health recovery.

### Rudra Jakhar

*Support Coordination Manager*



## GOOD NEWS STORIES

MHACA's Support Coordinator supported Pip in attending her NDIS plan review meeting. Pip had never successfully attended a meeting in the past as they were overwhelming for her. Her Support Coordinator encouraged her involvement in her own NDIS plan building process and helped her to prepare for the meeting. Pip managed to attend her meeting where communication strategies were put in place to make her feel as safe and in as much control as possible. Pip received a good outcome by getting her core funding increased to engage adequate weekly supports in line with an Occupational Therapist's report recommendations and gaining a new category of funding in 'Finding and Keeping a Job'. This funding will go towards supporting Pip with her sole trader business idea which shows great potential. Pip felt very proud of this achievement as it was a very positive and significant milestone in her recovery journey.

Charles Inkamala is a proud Western Arrernte man from Hermannsburg. He is a NDIS participant supported by the MHACA Support Coordination Team and resides in Lifestyle Solutions Supported Accommodation (SIL). Charles has been selected as a finalist at an exhibition in Darwin! The annual Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) and the Telstra NATSIAA Awards showcased his amazing artwork. He travelled to Darwin with Bindi Enterprises and his SIL Lifestyle Solutions (LSS) support workers to attend these events. MHACA's Support Coordinator organised his trip with the LSS team and obtained approval from Charles's Public Guardian.

MHACA's NDIS Support Coordination participant Charles Inkamala.

# CENTRAL AUSTRALIA SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING PROGRAM

## Cultivating Connection

The Northern Territory has one of the highest rates of suicide in Australia and strategies are in place to address this. MHACA delivers the Central Australia Suicide Prevention Training Program (CASPTP). The program delivers culturally appropriate training to develop awareness, knowledge and strategies that help reduce suicide in the community.

CASPTP offers the following accredited workshops to community members and organisations:

- safeTALK – Suicide Prevention
- ASIST – Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training
- Standard Mental Health First Aid

- Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid (Adult)
- Aboriginal Youth Mental Health First Aid

Over the last year, the CASPT Program has provided suicide prevention and mental health first aid training to 268 people in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek from different organisations including:

- Catholic Care NT
- Central Australia Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Central Australia Women's Legal Service
- Charles Darwin University
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
- Disability Advocacy Services
- EASA

Attendees after completing the 2-day ASIST training Jordan and Lynn delivered in April.



## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

'I enjoyed the ASIST workshop and I am confident I can help someone who might be having thoughts of suicide'

'The practical activity was a great way to implement ASIST into real life and practice. I learnt a lot.'

'Relevant and a good mix of slides, scenarios and role play.' (safeTALK training)

'Very interesting, informative, practical and useful' (safeTALK training)

- MacDonnell Regional Council
- North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency
- NPY Women's Council
- Purple House
- SaltBush
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre Alice Springs
- Skylight Mental Health
- Relationships Australia
- Alice Springs Steiner School

Workshop participants mentioned that both organisations and community members have an important role in helping people who may be experiencing mental health issues and suicide challenges.

This year, MHACA successfully recruited two local First Nations trainers to deliver the Indigenous Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (I-ASIST). I-ASIST provides a culturally relevant framework for participants to learn how to provide suicide first aid intervention. This course has been developed by First Nations people to provide culturally appropriate suicide prevention training. MHACA will be delivering I-ASIST in Central Australia to better support First Nation communities in addressing mental health and suicide challenges.

**Lynn Moloney**

*Training and Development Officer*

Attendees after completing the half-day suicide prevention training safeTALK in June.



# MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE

## Linda's Story

Mental health has always been my main area of professional interest. I have worked in community service organisations since 2009 delivering and managing a range of programs including mental health recovery, psychosocial supports, promotion prevention and early intervention.

In 2023, I planned to move from Tasmania to the Northern Territory to work but wasn't sure which area of NT. MHACA caught my eye as the mission and values align with mine. The range of services and the focus on lived experience were areas I had experience with and felt I could contribute positively at MHACA.

I went through the recruiting process and got the Senior Services Manager role which is part of MHACA's Senior Leadership team. The role oversees several programs including Central Australia Suicide Prevention Training Program, Housing and Homelessness Program, Pathways to Recovery Program and MHACA's Drop-in Centre.

There have been many highlights since joining MHACA in October 2023. One highlight was being able to spend time with participants at MHACA's 2024 Camp at Ross River Resort. Another was watching MHACA's team play cricket at Imparja Cup. On a daily basis, I enjoy engaging with participants here at MHACA and learning about each person I come into contact with.

I love living in Alice Springs and working at MHACA. I am very happy I moved here.

**Linda**



## Joseph's Story

I heard about MHACA through a friend who knew about the organisation and thought I could be a good fit due to my personality. I like making people smile and helping people who are going through difficult times. I believe in the saying 'there are no permanent situations in life'. If there is a problem, it must have a solution. Smiling costs nothing so keep smiling and feel good.

I dropped off my resume at MHACA, I was successful in the interview and I was offered a job.

My role at MHACA as a Day Program officer is to make sure participants enjoy being at MHACA and help them engage in different activities. I also prepare daily lunches for participants, pick them up and drop them off at the end of the day.

While working at MHACA, I learnt how to organise activities that all participants can enjoy and assess risks associated with those activities. I have also got to know each participant, learnt how mental health challenges can impact them and what I could do to make them feel included in the community.

The Participant Camp at Ross River Resort was a highlight for me. Sitting around the fire at night in the bush was fun and reminded me of my African lifestyle that I haven't had the chance to experience in the last 24 years of my being in Australia! Connecting to nature was like a healing process for me.

What I like most about working at MHACA is how everyone says "good morning" to each other every morning and love how everyone cares about each other, staff and participants. I also like the good respectful leadership at MHACA. I am proud to be working at MHACA and I am looking forward to growing in my career.

**Joseph**

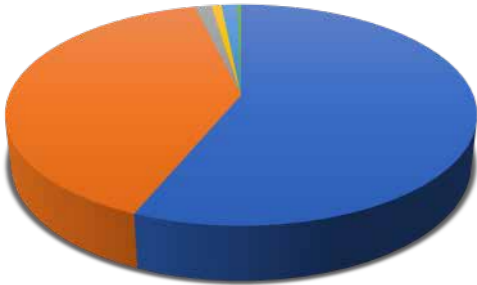


# TREASURER'S MESSAGE

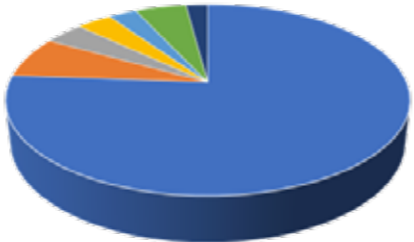
I am pleased to present the 2023/2024 Treasurer Report. MHACA ended the 2024 financial year with a trading surplus of \$208,621.

The total annual revenue for MHACA during the 2024 fiscal year was \$4.3 million which represents an increase of 14.8% when compared to 2023 financial year. The increase is due to the association gaining additional funding in 2024 financial year as well as an increase in generating NDIS income.

## Total Revenue - \$4.3 Million



## How We Spent Our Money - Total Expenses \$4.1 Million



In 2024 financial year, we see an increase in MHACA's total expenses by 10%. Labour costs comprise over 76% of the total expenses. MHACA's management team continues to implement several initiatives to improve staff retention.

Overall MHACA is in a strong financial position showing a working capital ratio of 4.25 and continues to have sufficient funds to meet all its current liabilities as and when they fall due.

**Lavenia Saville**  
Treasurer



To see MHACA's 2023-2024 Audited Financial Statement please go to our website [www.mhaca.org.au](http://www.mhaca.org.au)

The NDIS arm of the business continues to improve with the implementation of better systems and management monitoring. At the beginning of the 2024 year there was a real focus on the productivity, and this has resulted in a vastly improved economic result for this area of the business.

In a climate of continuing uncertainty, MHACA will continue to monitor the changes in the NDIS to assess its potential implications on the operations, reporting and governance arrangements that it may impose on the association.

Our changing landscape provides us with the opportunity to nurture and strengthen our relationship with Government and other stakeholders with a renewed focus on maintaining current contracts and developing new business partnerships.

## CONTACTS

Mental Health Association of Central Australia

- 14 Lindsay Ave, East Side 0870
- PO Box 2326 Alice Springs NT 0871
- (08) 8950 4600
- E: [info@mhaca.org.au](mailto:info@mhaca.org.au) W: [www.mhaca.org.au](http://www.mhaca.org.au)
- [MentalHealthAssociationCentralAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAssociationCentralAustralia)
- [@mhaca0870](https://www.instagram.com/mhaca0870)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Compilation:** Josefina Olmedo  
**Production:** Colemans Printing

©Mental Health Association of Central Australia 2024

*This annual report is printed on 100% recycled paper.*



MHACA gratefully acknowledges the support and funding from the Northern Territory Government and the Northern Territory Primary Health Network.



**MHACA**  
Mental Health  
Association of  
Central Australia



**NORTHERN  
TERRITORY**  
GOVERNMENT



**phn**  
NORTHERN TERRITORY  
An Australian Government Initiative

RURAL  
**Workforce**  
AGENCY NT

