

MHFA Training & Research Program

MHFA Friends Newsletter - January 2007



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 AWARD FOR MHFA PROGRAM
- 2 MHFA WEBSITE
- 3 ANNUAL REFRESHER COURSE
- 4 INSTRUCTOR STORIES
- 5 MHFA FOR U/G NURSING STUDENTS
- 6 NSW FARMERS ASSOCIATION AND MHFA
- 7 GRANTS FOR THE MHFA PROGRAM
- 8 INTERNATIONAL MHFA NEWS
- 9 YOUTH MHFA PROGRAM
- 10 ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MHFA PROGRAM

A HAPPY
NEW YEAR

THE MHFA TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROGRAM WISHES ALL MHFA INSTRUCTORS AND FRIENDS OF THE PROGRAM A HEALTHY AND SATISFYING 2007.

1. MHFA PROGRAM AWARDED VICTORIAN PUBLIC HEALTH AWARD



The MHFA Training and Research Program received the Public Health Programs Award for Innovation from VIC Health Minister Bronwyn Pike at Federation Square, Melbourne on 5 September 2006.

Prof Tony Jorm is on the far right of the photo and Leanne Northausen and Dr Claire Kelly in the middle of the front row.

More information available at this URL:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards/>

2. MHFA WEBSITE HITS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Over the last 12 months (1st January 06 – 31st Dec 06) there have been 72,400 unique visits and over 5,400 downloads of the MHFA manual PDF document.

3. REPORT FROM ANNUAL 2-DAY INSTRUCTOR REFRESHER COURSE

This year's 2-day Instructor Refresher Course was conducted in Melbourne on 13 & 14 November. A cohort of 80 MHFA Instructors attended



Day 1 saw an interesting selection of talks given by some mental health researchers from ORYGEN Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Day 2 saw a mixture of activities, a focal point being the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. Thank you to Greg Aldridge who came down from Canberra to conduct this for us.

4. NEWS FROM MHFA INSTRUCTORS

a) Peter Fotakis trained at the July 2006 course in Sydney. On his flight home to Perth, he got to practise what he had just learnt!

“Just a short note to say a big thank you to Betty and Len for the wonderful Instructor course in Sydney in July and to give you some immediate feed-back!

It started before take-off, when a young guy opposite me was looking decidedly anxious and on his own run-way to a panic attack! I introduced my self calmly and quietly and suggested the deep slow breathing exercise we are all familiar with.

This did the trick and he had an un-eventful trip (and so did the rest of the people on board!)

I feel privileged to have been in the right place at the right time and better prepared, because of the training from the course and the flow on confidence in myself.

I would also like to say thank you to all the other people I trained with. Their experiences and perceptions were a lesson in themselves, providing the shading to the big picture that Betty and Len portrayed”.

b) Write an article on MHFA and bingo! you get a paid invitation to speak at a conference in New Zealand – this is the experience of veteran MHFA Instructor **Joy Peters** from northern NSW trained in September 2004.

“It looks like I will be going to NZ in March 2007 to speak at one of the regional Dairy Farmers Conferences. The article I did for the Outback Magazine earlier this year (2006) was seen by one of the NZ Farmers who has taken a particular interest in MHFA and has invited me to speak at the Conference. The Conference attendees will be interested in the plight of Australian Farmers suffering the drought and the implications of this on their mental health”.

It also appears that a program such as MHFA that facilitates a simple yet valuable message about learning skills to help others is not yet available in NZ. Farming communities in NZ as in Australia rely heavily on community support and community spirit so I think the “first aid approach” is of particular interest as an opportunity to develop stronger farming communities in NZ. I’m looking forward to my visit in March 07”.

c) **Congratulations to the WA MHFA Instructor Partnership on winning an award.**

In September 2005, a group of 11 people from the Geraldton, WA region trained as MHFA Instructors. They formed a partnership, lead by **TJ Howe** and effectively rolled out MHFA courses in their region. In October 2006, this MHFA Instructors Partnership won the Western Australian State Award for Excellence in Health (Healthy Communities Category).

The award was presented to TJ Howe by the Minister for Health WA, Jim McGinty and Neal Fong the Director of Health WA at a gala dinner in Perth.



MHFA Instructor TJ Howe is 2nd from the left.

5. MHFA COURSE FOR NURSING UNDERGRADUATES AT NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY



When undergraduate nursing was transferred to the higher education sector some 20 years ago the new Bachelor of Nursing programs were comprehensive in nature. The intention was that new graduates would be able to work in a range of health care settings, including medical and surgical wards in general hospitals, in aged care services, in community health and in mental health services. This represented a significant change from what had previously been the case, when one could train (largely in a hospital) to become a general nurse, or a psychiatric nurse. While the transfer of nurse education brought many improvements, there were also difficulties. The ceasing of direct-entry psychiatric nursing undoubtedly contributed to a serious shortage of nurses interested in working in mental health services. A recent Commonwealth Government initiative has now sought to address this problem by establishing 420 new mental health nursing places nationally. The University of

Newcastle has been successful in gaining 60 of these new places. The intention is that 60 students entering the Bachelor of Nursing at Newcastle will have the opportunity of undertaking a comprehensive undergraduate nursing degree that will also include a major in mental health nursing. While new graduates will be able to work in a range of health service settings, they will have had enhanced studies including clinical practice opportunities in mental health. An important aspect of the mental health enhancements will be that students will undertake the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course in the first year of the BN, prior to commencing their first clinical placement. The use of the MHFA course in this way is being viewed as such an important program enhancement at Newcastle that Professor Hazelton, Head, School of Nursing and Midwifery has said that the inclusion of MHFA as a mandatory part of the program is being seen as an important part of the marketing strategy to recruit prospective students for the first intake in 2007. For more information, please contact Professor Mike Hazelton, Tel: 02 4921 6770, Email: Michael.Hazelton@newcastle.edu.au

6. NSW FARMERS ASSOCIATION WELCOMES MHFA TRAINING

As the severity of the drought and other issues adversely affected farmers, Jock Laurie, president of the NSW Farmers' Association, <http://www.nswfarmers.org.au>, brought together a group of key stakeholders in the area of rural mental health, to discuss how best to work together to address rural and remote mental health issues. This forum, held in June 2005, resulted in the creation of the NSW Farmers' Rural Mental Health Network Health Network (

http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/rural_campaigns/mental_health_network) and a NSW Farmers Blueprint for Maintaining the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the People on NSW Farms (<http://www.aghealth.org.au/blueprint/>).



On behalf of this Network, the NSW Farmers Association was successful in its state budget submission in receiving a grant to roll out the 2-day MHFA course. The Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in Orange is coordinating the delivery of these courses, which are being provided free of charge, with a focus on anyone who is an active leader in a farming community or has regular contact with the farming community. To date, existing MHFA Instructors have already held nine MHFA courses in locations including Scone, Warialda, Hay, Hillston and Warren.

7. MHFA PROGRAM SUCCESS WITH GRANTS

The MHFA Training and Research Program Team is delighted to have been successful in securing six grants, all of which will commence in January 2007.

a) National Suicide Prevention Strategy Grant

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/coag-mental-suicideprevention.htm>

Funding for 2.5 years to support the development and national roll-out of the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Program. The YMHFA course is to train supporters of adolescents, such as teachers, parents and youth workers. This grant includes fee scholarships to enable suitable MHFA Instructors to undertake the 3-day specialty course to train as a Youth MHFA Instructor. This grant will also provide for the appointment of a F/T YMHFA Co-ordinator from the end of January 2007.

b) Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant

A grant with the South Australian Dept Education and Community Services to conduct a randomised controlled trial of the Youth MHFA Program.

c) Beyondblue - Victorian Centre of Excellence

http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=6.710

For a one year grant to appoint a research assistant to develop MHFA standards appropriate for Indigenous Australians covering how to help:

1. a person developing a depressive disorder
2. a person who is suicidal
3. a person who has recently had a traumatic experience
4. a person having a panic attack.

d) Australian Department of Health and Ageing, Suicide Prevention Section, Mental Health and Workforce Division in conjunction with Auseinet

Funding has been promised to fund:

1. an Aboriginal MHFA Working Group comprising Aboriginal mental health experts to ensure the products developed for the Aboriginal MHFA Program are culturally appropriate and useful for Aboriginal people, and
2. the completion of the Aboriginal MHFA manual and development of a course workbook, instructor teaching notes and PowerPoint slides to accompany the 14 hour Aboriginal MHFA course.

e) Rowan Nicks Russell Drysdale Fellowship

<http://www.medfac.usyd.edu.au/scholarwards/fellowships/nicksdrysdale/index.php>

This is a one year fellowship to employ an Aboriginal person in a new F/T position of Co-ordinator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA Course.

f) Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH)

For a grant to roll out nationally the Aboriginal MHFA Program. Funding will provide for:

1. 120 scholarships for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people from OATSIH funded organisations to train as Instructors of the 14-hour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA course,
2. a F/T Administrative Assistant for 18 months.
3. a P/T Research Assistant for 12 months to help evaluate the program.
4. Production of 2 DVDs demonstrating helpful MHFA strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

g) The Family Court of Australia has been successful in obtaining a National Suicide Prevention Strategy Grant with funding to the Family Court of Australia for 2.5 years for a national roll-out of the Family Court Mental Health Support Program. The MHFA Program was involved with the development of the mental health material and the successful pilot of this project.

This program aims to improve the Federal Magistrate Court and Family Court of Australia's systems and processes to ensure that they are supportive of the mental health and emotional well-being of clients by promoting awareness, providing skills and putting in place supporting infrastructure to enable the support of timely referral of 'at risk' clients to appropriate mental health support services in the community. Existing MHFA Instructors will help in this national roll-out.

8. INTERNATIONAL MHFA NEWS

a) Scottish MHFA <http://www.healthscotland.org.uk/smhfa/>

By November 2006, SMHFA had delivered 327 courses to 4,495 people across Scotland. To date, the National MHFA Training Team in Scotland has conducted 6 Instructor Training Courses, resulting in 175 MHFA Instructors trained. SMHFA is on course to reach its target of 300 MHFA instructors by 2008.



b) MHFA Hong Kong

The modifications and Chinese translation of the MHFA manual are now completed by the Mental Health Association of Hong Kong (MHAHK) which has received excellent feedback from the MHFA courses it has been conducting. The MHAHK is now planning to conduct early this year its first Instructor Training course to add to its team of MHFA Instructors.



Mental Health is the Heart of Health
健康之中心，乃心中健康

c) **MHFA Canada** http://www.amhb.ab.ca/What_We_Do/mhfa.asp



**Mental Health
First Aid**

In November 2006, MHFA Canada, auspiced by the Alberta Mental Health Board, brought Betty Kitchener over to help established a National MHFA Canada Training Team. Welcome to two amazing Master Facilitators: Gail Eastman and Louise Nieder-Heitmann. Gail and Louise were accredited as MHFA

Instructors in Alberta by Betty back in March 2006. Betty will return in the northern summer to help train additional Master Facilitators. Gail and Louise will be conducting the 5-day MHFA Instructor training course most months, with the January and February courses already planned.

Lori Weltz is now the Director of MHFA Canada and can be contacted on:

Lori.Weltz@amhb.ab.ca

c) **MHFA Finland** <http://www.pohjanmaahanke.fi/>

All MHFA Finland materials have now been produced and the first two MHFA Finland courses were conducted in the Ostrobothnian region in early December 2006. Congratulations to MHFA Instructors Christina Björklund and Marlene Gädda for delivering these courses. More 12 hour MHFA courses are planned for early 2007.



d) **MHFA Singapore.**

The MHFA Singapore instructors have been very busy conducting courses for staff and students at the National University of Singapore as well as for volunteers of Silver Ribbon

<http://www.silverribbonsingapore.com/> the national anti-stigma organization. Len Kanowski will return to Singapore in July 2007 to conduct two additional instructor training courses. Len will conduct the training in conjunction with some of the members of the original Singapore group who will eventually form their own small group of Trainers of Instructors.

e) **MHFA Ireland** <http://www.seupb.org/displaynews2.asp?NewsID=1000194>

An Irish cross-border mental health initiative provided funding to pilot the MHFA course throughout 2006. The Scottish MHFA National Training team trained 15 Irish MHFA Instructors who conducted the 12 hour MHFA course to 234 participants in the border regions of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The results of this successful pilot were launched in Armagh on 29 November 2006.

9. YOUTH MHFA PROGRAM (YMHFA)

The 14 hour Youth MHFA Program is well along the path of development. The YMHFA manual is written with additional chapters on deliberate self-harm and eating disorders. This course is aimed to be delivered to adults working with adolescents. We have just appointed Chris Scanlon, a seasoned MHFA Instructor, to the new F/T YMHFA co-ordinator position.

Chris will be joining the MHFA team at the end of January from the Barwon Mental Health Team in Geelong and he will take on a key role as a Trainer of YMHFA Instructors, along with Betty Kitchener.



The first of the specialty 3-day Youth MHFA Instructor training Courses will be held in Melbourne 17-19 April 2007. To train as an YMHFA Instructor, one needs first to become an accredited MHFA Instructor through completing the regular 5-day MHFA Instructor Training Course and to have successfully conducted at least 3 X 12 hour MHFA courses. Further selection criteria need to be met and the specialty 3-day YMHFA Instructor Training Course then needs to be undertaken to be accredited to deliver the 14-hour Youth MHFA course. The MHFA Training and Research Program has been thrilled to receive a grant from the National Suicide Prevention Strategy that will allow us to offer 160 scholarships over the next 2.5 years to cover the tuition fees for these 3 days of training. There will be 55 scholarships available in 2007, 70 scholarships in 2008 & 35 in the first half of 2009.

To apply, find the YMHFA application form at this URL:

http://www.mhfa.com.au/documents/YMHFA_Instructor_Application_Jan07.doc



10. ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MHFA PROGRAM (AMHFA)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFA Program (AMHFA) is progressing very well. We are in the process of advertising for a F/T Aboriginal MHFA Coordinator. Once recruited, the Coordinator will take on a key role as a Trainer of Aboriginal Instructors, along with Len Kanowski. We hope to employ an additional Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

Trainer-of-Instructors to allow a staff complement of one male and one female Aboriginal Trainers of Instructors. This second position depends on success for funding presently being sought.

We have been actively working with an Aboriginal Working Group to develop the manual and resources to be used in the 14 hour AMHFA course. This work is nearing completion. AMHFA Instructor training courses for Aboriginal people will commence in late January, with 12 of these courses scheduled for 2007. http://www.mhfa.com.au/instructor_courses.htm#ATSI_5day The goal is to have 120 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Instructors across all States and Territories by December 2007, thanks to generous funding from the Commonwealth Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH).

There is also a specialty 3-day A-MHFA Instructor Training Course for already accredited (non-Aboriginal) MHFA Instructors to train to deliver the 14-hour AMHFA course. The first specialty 3-day course will be held in Melbourne between 29-31 May this year. For further information on the Aboriginal MHFA courses, please contact Len Kanowski: Len.Kanowski@mh.org.au