



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Michelle Obama supports Australian pioneered Mental Health First Aid Program

Addressing an audience of government, business and nonprofit leaders in Washington, USA First Lady Michelle Obama has spoken about how we must change the way we support and care for people with mental health and substance use problems, and stated that the Australian developed Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a strategy to do just that.

Michelle Obama explained, "I went through some of this training [MHFA] a few weeks ago...and I saw just how useful it is. It really gives you the skills you need to identify and ultimately help someone in need. Because you never know when these kinds of skills might be useful." Watch video <https://vimeo.com/121302846>

MHFA Australia CEO Betty Kitchener said, "It is wonderful to know that the Mental Health First Aid Program is helping people with mental health problems and for its usefulness to receive acknowledgement from the First Lady of the US".

MHFA courses train members of the public in how to assist a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. Developed in 2000 by Australian couple Betty Kitchener ^{AM} and Professor Tony Jorm, 2% of Australian adults have now completed MHFA Training (350,000 people). The program has also spread from Australia to 23 other countries.

In 2009, the MHFA Program was adopted in the USA by a consortium of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Missouri Department of Mental Hygiene and the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. One-hundred and fifty thousand Americans have done the training to date.

Many evaluation studies have been carried out on the effects of MHFA training. A recent meta-analysis of 15 studies, published in the International Review of Psychiatry, concluded that MHFA increases participant knowledge about mental health, decreases negative attitudes and increases supportive behaviour towards individuals with mental health problems.

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Mental Health First Aid Australia is a national non-profit organisation focused on mental health training and research.

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