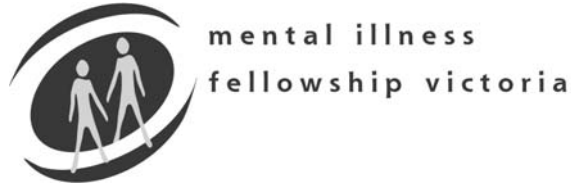


**News & Photo Desk,
Community/Health/
Medical Reporters**



Australian First for Mental Health Week

Sunday October 5, Station Street Fairfield

UNIQUE EVENT BRINGS COMMUNITY AND MENTAL ILLNESS TOGETHER

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria, with the support of the Fairfield Traders Association, Darebin City Council and Bayford VW has created an Australian first - the 'Open Mind Day Station Street Fiesta' in Station Street Fairfield from midday to 6pm on Sunday October 5th, marking the first day of Mental Health Week.

The unique event breaks new ground in many ways:

Many performers will be people with a mental illness including six-piece rock outfit **Bi-Polar Bears** whose members each have mental illness. The band has just launched its new CD 'Only Breathing' at The Esplanade to great acclaim.

Visitors can get straight answers from Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria volunteers and staff on the day. There will be information available to bust old myths surrounding mental illness.

But its not all about mental health: MCs comedian Rod Quantock and Mike Larkan will introduce The Minister for Health Bronwyn Pike, there's life-size snakes and ladders, a wrestling ring, Indonesian belly dancers and the MI Shop Fashion Parade. There will also be two stages featuring fantastic local bands, comedy and mental illusionist Mark Mayer, as well as carnival rides, face painters, children's farm and traders' stalls.

The Mental Illness Fellowship with the local community will be attempting to set a world record on the number of teddy bears joining hands in a line. These teddies (and their human friends) come together to support people with mental illness, their families and friends. Teddy Bears were chosen as they are accepted just as they come. An underlying message of the record attempt is that *Teddy Bears don't stigmatise, people do*. Great vision.

What makes Open Mind Day unique is that it gives people a great excuse to enjoy the festivities while also conveying a serious message about mental health. Thousands of people from the local community are expected together with people with mental illness, their family, friends and volunteers.

Open Mind Day also provides an excellent platform for the "Stop the Stigma" campaign. The key message being 'One in five Australians is directly affected by mental illness. Five in five can help'.

MI Fellowship Chief Executive Elizabeth Crowther enthused: "Our Open Mind Day Station Street Fiesta is a family fun day where the issues of mental illness are subtly communicated. It's the first of its kind in Australia. We look forward to a great family day out which will help understanding and acceptance of people with a mental illness".

Mental Illness Fellowship is Victoria's leading membership-based not-for-profit organisation working with people with mental illness, their families and friends to improve their wellbeing. It runs \$7m worth of programs statewide. www.mifellowship.org for details. To contact Liz Crowther of the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria contact Brett de Hoedt on 0414 713 802 / 03 9510 0848.