

**FAO News, Community,
Religious, Health
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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grief and Loss Service helps ease pain at Easter time

The Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria will once again offer support to those left behind by suicide at its grief and loss service at St John's Lutheran Church, Southbank this Saturday March 27 at 11am.

"Sadly people with a mental illness have a rate of suicide far higher than the general population," says Gerard Reed, Family Support Co-ordinator at the Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria (MI Fellowship Victoria). "This means many carers not only have the challenge of a loved one with a mental illness but are left to deal with the pain when their loved one takes their own life."

The service, which is non religious and non denominational will be led by Mr Reed, a former theology student who now devotes his working life to supporting people with mental illness, their family and friends.

MI Fellowship runs a similar service in the lead up to Christmas. "It's times like these when the absence of the departed is brought home," says Mr Reed. "While we can't take away the pain there's no doubt that meeting people in similar circumstances over a cup of tea helps everyone realise they are not alone."

Interviews available: Gerard Reed is available to media to discuss the issue of suicide and grief in relation to mental illness. He is an informed and eloquent speaker. Media enquiries to Brett de Hoedt, Hootville Communications 03 9510 0848 / 0414 713 802.

Mental Illness Fellowship Grief and Loss Service
Saturday March 27 at 11am
St John's Lutheran Church, Southbank
20 City Road, Southbank

General information: There is no charge to attend; attendees are encouraged to bring a flower as part of the service. No bookings required. Enquiries 9482 4199.

Background: The Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria started in 1978, has an income budget of \$7 million and has over 500 volunteers working with our 170 staff. It provides 35 programs across Victoria, in areas such as rehabilitation, respite, employment and accommodation. In 2003 MI Fellowship's employment program was a joint winner of the Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award and the National Achievement award at the International Mental Health Service Awards.