



VICTORIAN CARER PROGRAM RECEIVES GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Mental Illness Education Gives Families a Better Chance

The **Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria** (MI Fellowship) is set to nationally launch its education program for carers of people with mental illness. The Department of Health and Ageing has funded a trial of the **Well Ways** mental illness education program: helping families find a better way to commence in September. It is the first program of its kind to receive Federal support.

“When people learn that a loved one has a mental illness they often feel powerless and isolated,” said Elizabeth Crowther, MI Fellowship’s Chief Executive. “Well Ways provides support, insight and suggested ways of coping. It’s a good starting point for any family dealing with mental illness.”

MI Fellowship is the state's biggest membership-based mental health organisation delivering \$9 million worth of services through 35+ programs in areas of rehabilitation, respite, a help line, employment, education, training and accommodation. Well Ways was developed by MI Fellowship following extensive consultation with families of people with mental illness and research of similar programs in other countries.

Professor Harvey Whiteford from the Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research is Mental Health Advisor to the Federal Government and leads the team selected to rewrite the National Mental Health Policy. Professor Whiteford who also consults for the World Health Organisation and World Bank has praised Well Ways.

“People affected by mental illness often do not have access to the support and services they need,” said Professor Whiteford. “I congratulate the Mental Illness Fellowship for developing the Well Ways program to help families affected by mental illness to care for their loved ones. It is a step in the right direction – not just for the carers of people with a mental illness but for the Australian community.”

Well Ways is a non-clinical program delivered by people experienced in caring for someone with mental illness. Twelve modules help to develop carers’ confidence and knowledge by examining cause, treatment and recovery from mental illness; the emotional impact on families; the mental health and legal systems as well as demystifying medical terms.

Follow-up sessions explore issues like grief, communication and managing difficult behaviour. After completing the twelve month program participants may undergo training to become a Well Ways facilitator.

For more information about Well Ways visit www.mifellowship.org. Case studies and interviews with carers who have completed the Well Ways program are available.

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