

## NEW Cairns Older Persons' Mental Health Professionals Network

**The Mental Health Professionals Network (MHPN) is working with locally based Clinical Psychologist, Dr Tania McKirdy to establish an interdisciplinary network in Cairns with a focus on older persons' mental health.**

Tania McKirdy is a clinical psychologist based in Cairns. Since the late 1980s, Tania has worked in the public, private, and non-government sectors, across both regional and rural settings including Townsville and Gladstone.

The previous 5 years have seen her involvement in establishing and developing her Cairns-based private practice, with its focus on working with older adults - services comprise therapy and counselling, home visits, and presentations to community groups with older adult membership. Recent years have also seen her take up short-term roles as a James Cook University psychology tutor, and hospital-based practitioner.

Tania completed doctoral studies in 2011, graduating from James Cook University's Clinical Geropsychology program. Her research examined socio-demographic, attitudinal and psychological factors that contribute to the way in which older adults seek professional help for dementia-type symptoms. Tania had the opportunity to present her findings at the International Congress of Applied Psychology (2014).

As a practitioner, Tania has a strong interest and commitment to engaging in a collegial and collaborative manner with other practitioners. She welcomes the opportunity to establish and develop a network with others who have a shared passion in assisting older adults.

**The purpose of the network** is to provide a platform for interdisciplinary professional development, peer support, and gaining an understanding of how services and individuals can work together to meet the mental health and related needs of the older population. The network plans to meet four times a year.

### The network aims to

- Capacity building across professional disciplines by sharing information, resources and training to increase knowledge and skills of practitioners providing mental health and related support to the older population;
- Discuss interdisciplinary care planning through de-identified case discussions, and service planning to address challenges and gaps in local service provision;
- Discuss how services and individual practitioners can work collaboratively together to meet the mental health needs of older people;
- Create new opportunities for local networking to open up and strengthen referral pathways for older people at risk or experiencing mental health issues.

### What you need to do:

1. **Contact** MHPN Project Officer, Angela Miller at [a.miller@mhpn.org.au](mailto:a.miller@mhpn.org.au) or by phone on **03 8662 6643** to join the mailing list
2. **Forward** this email to colleagues who may have an interest in this network.

### Who may benefit from being involved?

Any practitioner from local mental health and aged care services with a professional interest in mental health and ageing, including:

- General Practitioners
- Registered Nurses
- Practice Nurses
- Geriatricians
- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Social Workers
- Mental Health Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Counsellors
- Psychotherapists
- ACAT providers
- Pharmacists
- others providing mental health and related support to older people in the local community