



## **Annual Report 2009-2010**

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## MIFA Board Members and Office Bearers 2009- 2010

Hon Rob Knowles AO	MIF Vic - President
Hon Frank Walker	SFNSW - Vice President
Ken Meissner	MIFQ – Secretary
Bronwyn Russell	MHCNT - Treasurer
Wendy Woods	MIFNQ – resigned May 2010
Bob James	MIFNQ – commenced June 2010
Steve Wiles	MIFWA
Kate Shipway	ARAFMI (Tas)
Marion Croser	MIFSA



“What a wonderful, relaxing, nurturing morning. Mental Health Carers is a sanctuary of caring and friendship. The support I receive here is invaluable in relieving the stress of being a carer. The centre itself and the staff and fellow carers make all the difference in my life. What an essential and creative service.”

“Helping others and giving back to the community is something that has really helped me in my own recovery journey.”



“Having therapeutic groups gives participants the opportunity to learn strategies to help overcome the barriers they face. It’s been an enormous stepping stone in my recovery journey and a stable foundation to build on for the future. It’s worth it, because I know I’ll get where I want in the end.”

## From the President



This was a year of highs and lows for the advocacy objectives of MIFA. With the selection of Professor Pat McGorry as a very worthy Australian of the Year, hopes were high. We saw mental health become a major topic of public concern, generating daily news items in all forms of media. It remains so as I write, with frequent references in parliament from all sides of politics. We also have Australia's first Federal Minister of Mental Health, The Hon Mark Butler MP, and the first State Commissioner of Mental Health, Mr Eddie Bartnik in Western Australia. All this focus comes on the heels of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission's report in 2009, of which I was one of the authors, which gave high prominence to community mental health as one of the most urgent elements in health reform.

Regrettably, after a federal election campaign in which mental health was consistently rated as one of the two or three top issues, the funding outcome to date has been little short of abysmal for people with severe and chronic mental illness and their families. The lobbying in the new and less predictable world of minority government will remain intense, but as of late 2010, the long overdue expansion of successful recovery-oriented services remains elusive.

Nevertheless, MIFA consolidated its role as the leading voice of lived experience, participating in policy formulation and program reviews, and continuing to achieve a high level of access to politicians of all parties. More than ever, our authentic, grass-roots perspective on priorities for better services is listened to.

In November 2009, our former long-serving and highly effective Executive Director, Margaret Springgay, moved on to what she calls 'semi-retirement', although she is still very active in state and national carer's organisations. At our AGM last year we announced that Margaret would become the first honorary Life Member of MIFA, a small recognition of the enormous contribution she made over nearly eight years. With David Meldrum now firmly established in the role, we have continued and built on her legacy.

In a year of considerable activity, I want to highlight the Parliamentary Friends of Schizophrenia breakfast in May this year. Consumers and staff from both MIFA and other service providers brought their messages of hope to politicians, political staff and bureaucrats, cutting through in a way that no amount of sophisticated lobbying can achieve. This was a perfect example of the work we must continue wherever we can, bringing the lived experience, and the proof of lives being turned around directly to the key decision-makers in ways that are hard to ignore. We owe a great deal to those consumers and front-line staff who are prepared to take part in these events.

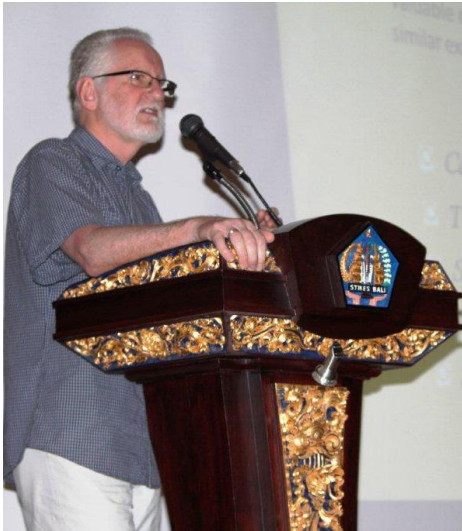
In April 2010, the combined Board and CEOs meeting of MIFA commissioned the Executive Director to consult with senior staff and Boards of all MIFA member organisations about our future directions. MIFA has not had a current strategic plan for some time, so it is perhaps not surprising that a multitude of ideas for the next stage of development have emerged. The meetings in November will focus on setting strategies, remembering that MIFA is a 'minnow' in resource terms amongst the multitude of interest groups operating in the broader mental health sector. We know that with well-chosen priorities, and excellent collaboration between MIFA and the member organisations, we can have a major impact, which is nothing less than our thousands of individual consumer, carer and other members expect.

My thanks as always to my fellow Board members, who already give up a great deal of time serving their state and territory member organisations. Your many contributions to MIFA are vital to maintaining our momentum, particularly your advocacy to your own Boards concerning financial support of the secretariat. Special thanks are due to Bronwyn Russell and Ken Meissner for their work on the Finance and Audit Committee, which has helped steer MIFA to a reasonably healthy outcome for 2009/10, in an environment where sponsorship has been harder to find.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Knowles".

Hon Rob Knowles AO

## From the Executive Director



In November 2009, Margaret Springgay completed the handover of the Executive Director's position. I was lucky to have full access to her encyclopaedic knowledge as I strove to make sense of the many people, projects, organisations and issues that drive the work of MIFA.

In that process, and ever since, I have enjoyed total support and collaboration from all the member organisations, and the Board members. It has also been an absolute pleasure to get to know many of the staff in each state and territory, who have been unfailingly optimistic and helpful in pursuing our objectives. The variety, quality and commitment of the people who choose to work with us is a daily revelation. They, our volunteers and our consumers and carers are the voices that cut through to the opinion makers and funders that we must influence.

A major project this year, beginning in April 2010 and completed in August, was to consult with all Boards and senior staff groups about the future directions of MIFA. The outcomes will be clearer soon, as we consider a summary of the ideas that flowed, but the sense of joint purpose, of shared vision, that has emerged is a great example of how process is just as important as content.

Progress has been good in some areas, especially national advocacy. Building on Margaret's legacy, I have enjoyed excellent access to politicians of all parties, FaHCSIA and DoHA senior staff, state 'peaks', Community Mental Health Australia, AGPN, MHCA, CHF and others. During the federal election campaign I believe MIFA was able to 'punch above its weight' in putting a point of view on funding priorities. However, I'm the first to admit that the outcomes are not good enough yet, and the advocacy work must continue. Pharmaceutical company support for projects including Parliamentary Friends of Schizophrenia, Schizophrenia Awareness Week and our excellent series of policy papers has continued to be generous, allowing us to advocate and educate more effectively in a number of ways.

Other objectives have been frustratingly slow to progress. We resolved more than three years ago to pursue a closer formal relationship with ARAFMI nationally, and very little has moved this year on that front, despite much discussion and exchanges of letters. Early in 2010 MIFA put in a proposal to DoHA to fund a multi-state roll-out of the SA 'Tobacco and Mental Illness' program. Despite an enthusiastic reception from DoHA for the idea, the election 'caretaker period' has caused a long delay for a project that was on the Minister's desk in July. Similarly, to date we have not been successful in attracting funding from FaHCSIA to expand delivery of 'MI Recovery', which is a valuable addition to the Well Ways suite that we want to see available to consumers through all our member organisations.

Overall, the finances of MIFA are in quite good shape, due to tight control of administrative costs and generous support from the members and from our sponsors. Some of the proposals being considered for future development of MIFA have budget implications, so as well as a more accountable business plan, a wider fund-raising strategy will have increased importance.

My thanks to Susan Golley and June Sperryn in my office, who make a contribution well beyond the part-time hours they are paid for. It helps give us the appearance of a much bigger organisation than we really are, We get on very well for a team of people who often don't physically meet from one week to the next, and I am very conscious of how lucky I am compared to Margaret Springgay, who mostly laboured alone.

Finally, my deep appreciation goes to Rob Knowles, who is an exceptionally busy man, but always makes the time to talk when I need it. Rob's loyalty to MIFA, and his sound judgement are invaluable assets that serve us all well.

David Meldrum

## Our People, Our Activity



“When I decided I needed help, I couldn’t make sense of it, but now I’m in a place where I’m working towards goals that I didn’t see possible 10 years ago. Getting information has got rid of misconceptions I had about my illness – it’s about acceptance of me as a person. Since coming to MIFSA one of the noticeable changes is the fact that I have achieved goals. Before my goal was to please everyone, now I’m doing what I want to do, what I believe in.”

“You find yourself reaching out and getting help from an organisation like the Mental Illness Fellowship. You find a whole new family, a support network, a forum to speak freely and be acknowledged.”

	FTE Staff	Members	Volunteers	Participants	Public Education	Helpline Contacts	Budget
SFNSW	206	1,500	479	Consumers 2,078 Carers 5,502	3,621	5,150	\$11,303,494
MI F Vic	268	1,083	341	Consumers 2,253 Families 974	General 4,007 Open Mind Fiesta 40,000	2,453	\$17,300,000
MIFQ	64	778	139	985	1,025	1,639	\$4,000,000
MIFNQ	21	160	55	595	3,400	3,100	\$1,600,000
MIFSA	140	1,000	150	3,085	1,440	2,200	\$6,000,000
MH Carers NT	9	45	9	656	70	856	\$551,735
MIFWA	35	330	25	1,553	30	2,786	\$2,500,000
ARAFMI (TAS)	3	121	27	792	700	838	\$144,562
<b>Totals 2009-2010</b>	<b>746</b>	<b>4,972</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>17,499</b>	<b>54,293</b>	<b>18,166</b>	<b>\$43,399,791</b>

## Highlights from Our Members



“I value being able to make a contribution and by volunteering. I feel that I am giving something back to the community that supports me. “

As part of our strategy to reach people we haven't reached before, MIFSA succeeded in securing funding for service provision to people with humanitarian needs via the Personal Helpers and Mentors program.

We have had other wins in our strategic goal to ensure 'access to MIFSA programs has been improved for Indigenous people and those from culturally and linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds'. MIFSA has also received an extension of funding to increase services to Indigenous Australian people and humanitarian entrants in the western metropolitan area.

Our plan to deliver a broader range of programs for carers has included developing a Residential Respite Accommodation Program. Following long and arduous legal proceedings, MIFSA is finally in a position to support carers to take a break while we offer people experiencing mental illness rest, relaxation and a break from their usual routines.

We have further extended our work in regional South Australia delivering one to one support services, activity programs, education and carer support programs.



“I find the more I come along, the more at home I feel - people are generally accepting. The activity program leaders are very approachable and encouraging.”

The past year has been a busy one at ARAFMI Tasmania with more than a 1000 people signed up, some as paying members, but the majority receive various electronic and hard copy newsletters and other information that is sent out from our northern and southern office.

In Schizophrenia Awareness Week in May, ARAFMI Tasmania in association with Richmond Fellowship and Aspire conducted 6 events across the state and these were attended by 450 people. Sandy Jeffs renowned poet and author and public speaker, who lives with schizophrenia was the keynote speaker.

In Mental Health Week Arafmi Tasmania contributed to organisational displays in the north and south as well as advertising in various news papers.

There have been organisational changes at ARAFMI Tasmania with the new EO Christabel Alliston who began work on September the 13<sup>th</sup> located at the northern office. Currently, the administration needs of the northern and southern offices are being reviewed and the work is being carried out towards a new phone Helpline system for 2011.



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### **Mental Health Carers’ Hub**

The Mental Health Carers Hub was launched in Cairns in October at an event attended by ninety people which included four sitting members including Sen. Jan McLucas, the Mayoress of Cairns, Mental Health service providers, staff, carers.

The Hub has proved very successful as a ‘one stop shop’ for carers offering education and support through ‘well ways’ counselling; information of interest to carers; appropriate referral channels; respite; and advocacy. MIFNQ has worked in collaboration with Mental Health Services, ATODS, and Anglicare.

The Hub model was designed to address issues highlighted in the *“Report on the Inquiry into Better Support for Carers: Who cares...?”* (April, 2009, Canberra).

### **The Choir of Unheard Voices**

In 2008, MIFNQ and Mackay Integrated Mental Health Services (MIMHS) coordinated a weekly two-hour choir tuition session for consumers living in the community who experience mental illness. The television series, *The Choir of Hard Knocks*, was the inspiration for this project because of the change it was able to bring about in the lives of people who were disadvantaged in terms of homelessness, alcohol and drug dependence, and/or mental illness.

The choir has not only produced outstanding outcomes for participants, developing confidence, social skills and esteem that take their recovery journey to new levels; but has also showcased what is possible, not only to other consumers but to the wider community. This simple initiative has diminished stigma and is an example of ‘social inclusion in action’. Last year, following a series of local performances, ultimately saw the choir perform (by invitation) at a major international conference in Sydney, before travelling to perform at the closing of the Queensland Parliament. The difference in the lives of the participants is simply profound.



“I now have my life back because of the program.”

### **MI Recovery**

In 2009-2010, MIFQ delivered two MI Recovery programs as part of a national project led by Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria. A total of 21 participants attended the two MIFQ programs, which were delivered over eight weeks. Four facilitators, who also have a lived experience of mental illness, were trained in 2009-2010 to maximise MIFQ’s capacity to deliver future MI Recovery programs.

### **Personal Helpers and Mentors Program**

In May 2007, MIFQ (with the Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria as lead agency) was awarded funds to establish one of the 28 demonstration sites for the Commonwealth funded Personal Helpers and Mentors (PHaMs) program on the Gold Coast.

In July 2008, MIFQ was successful in its applications to FaHCSIA to provide the PHaMs program at Toowoomba and the Northern Sunshine Coast for the funding period March 2009 to June 2011. The Toowoomba site includes rural areas such as Gatton, Helidon,

“It has been said that you can measure the humanity of a nation by the way it treats its weakest citizens, the imprisoned and the mentally ill. With forty thousand people not getting the help they require I hate to think what that says about us.”

Crows Nest, Yarraman, and Dalby. The Northern Sunshine Coast site is one of the largest in Queensland and includes Maroochydore, Nambour, Noosa, Tewantin, Gympie, Gayndah, Murgon, and Cherbourg.

#### **Day to Day Living in the Community**

The Haven Hub House at Gladstone has become well established and respected in the local community. Since June 2008, the Gladstone service had experienced very rapid growth. Strong collaborative partnerships and relationships with other local mental health service providers have been forged, thereby providing additional benefit for participants. Members have been able to enjoy getaways, multicultural functions, and vocational TAFE courses.

The Haven Hub House is fortunate to have many talented volunteers who give their time and expertise to assist members. The funding for the Gladstone service has been renewed for the period 2009 to 2011.



Well Ways: “It made me more positive about my role as a mental health carer”

“The empathy, passion and commitment PHaMs workers have to working alongside participants is constantly reinforced by the recovery process and achievements of each participant. A participant’s journey and strength belongs to them, that they share this journey is testament to their courage.”

This year saw a number of new services come to the Fellowship following tenders and submissions.

We were successful in securing six Disability Employment Service sites which more than replaces the loss of our Job Network and Personal Support Program services last year. This program allows us to continue to work closely with consumers and support their endeavours in education and employment.

We also received a substantial grant from the nib Foundation which will assist us to standardise, roll out and evaluate the ONFIRE! program for young carers. This program has been unfunded for 10 years but we now have the opportunity to prove its value and spread it across the country. We were also successful in adding another Personal Helpers and Mentors program to the three existing ones.

We have put in place many systems over the past two years to ensure that we are a quality organisation with strong governance systems and accountability. We have built a small but growing reserve fund and have established a number of other legal entities which will stand the Fellowship in good stead.

Of most importance amongst these is the Sunflower Foundation which has been established to assist the ongoing work of the Fellowship. Between the Board and the Executive we have been working to secure the future of the Fellowship for the next 20 years and to provide a strong and sustainable base for any and all future growth. Such security ensures that we are able to provide the services that consumers and carers are seeking and continue our core business of advocacy.



“I just wanted to let you know how useful your Employer Tool-Kit has been for our organisation and to thank you for making it so freely available.”

Our achievements continue to be reported against the three planks of our strategic plan to build integrated services, create innovation and an evidence base, and build organisational capacity. We continued to deliver services centred on the desired outcomes of people who use our services, by redesigning four of our seven day programs with very positive outcomes.

We were successful in building employment services which target people with mental illness who have not been able to access these programs from generic services in the past. We are very early in bedding down these programs but already have firm evidence and feedback that we are reaching the people who need these services.

There have been many highlights in 2009-10, but one that I think about has been the performances by our carers' choir. The joy that the participants experience is contagious and energising. I also want to mention the Commonwealth funding for MI Recovery, a consumer peer-education program. This funding has enabled consumer program leaders to be prepared in South Australia, Victoria, ACT, and South and North Queensland.

During 2009-10, our services grew by 20%, and more detailed descriptions of these services and the areas of growth can be found within our Annual Report. Our growth has required us to pay attention to staff and infrastructure development. A very active staff development program was put in place and improvements in IT infrastructure were made. We introduced new financial reporting and budget forecasting software, which has provided better access and information to all managers across the organisation.



“With my respite worker I was able to go out and go to the community centre for the first time in 10 years. It was great.”

Last year MIFWA reported increased funding from the Commonwealth, i.e. FaHCSIA, for the delivery of the Well Ways suite of programs in the South West, Goldfields and Wheatbelt regions of WA. Staff have reported favourably on the partnerships formed with the regional NGO's to establish a pool of trained Well Ways carer facilitators in each of these regions.

The Family Support Program has been in operation for approximately 2 years and is currently supporting 46 families in the Perth North Metropolitan area. A number of community partnerships exist with a view to providing a holistic service to families where there is mental illness present. FaHCSIA has extended this program for an additional year to June, 2011 and we hope to attract ongoing funding beyond 2011 by demonstrating the exceptional outcomes of this program.

One of the shining achievements of the Family Support program has been the partnership with COMIC WA (Children of Mentally Ill consumers) who provide ongoing community education and training to raise awareness of the needs of parents and children.

“I feel comfortable, safe and secure at Pete’s Place. This is great”



COMIC WA was the inspiration for establishing MIFWA’s Lotus Education Service, which held its official launch during Schizophrenia Awareness Week in May this year. The Co-ordinator is building a register of people with a lived experience to deliver community education and training.

The MIFWA website is now complete and a source of great pride as part of our modernised initiatives to disseminate information to our members and others who seek information about mental illness and resources

Our national body, the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) and sister Fellowships in the other States remain a great source of inspiration and sharing with a number of projects shared between States. The NSW Schizophrenia Fellowship for example were successful in a tender to be part of a panel of training providers to deliver training in mental health, to Centrelink staff in a number of States. Carers have greatly benefited from the roll out of Well Ways (developed by MI Fellowship Victoria) in Perth metro and the south west regions of WA. MIFWA also benefits from the efforts of MIFA in securing funding from Janssen Cilag to bring international experts to WA to present during Schizophrenia Awareness Week each year.

This financial year saw an increase across all programs in the number of people using our service. This was largely due to the increasing need for assistance from within our community, and to our continued commitment of providing programs and services relevant to our client’s needs. These programs have included:

- carer support groups in Darwin, Coolalinga, Batchelor, Adelaide River and Alice Springs
- educational workshops for carers such as Wellways, SANE Grief and Bereavement, Boundaries for Carers and Quality use of Medicines
- advocacy for both carers and consumers
- drop in centre for consumers in Darwin and for carers in Alice Springs
- social and recreational program for consumers
- respite at our respite house
- individual emotional support

“Boundaries Workshop was very helpful for me to get in touch with some feelings around my family issues. I found another piece of the puzzle, which gave me understanding and resolution.”

Our plans over the next financial year include modifications to the Darwin office to include a carers’ room where carers can come and relax and utilise the resource library. The room will also provide a private area to conduct face to face emotional support, assessments and small group support sessions.

We will also be actively seeking funding to re-locate Pete’s Place to an air conditioned premises to enable a number of different programs to be run over the wet season.

We also currently have some new workshops in the pipeline to be rolled out over the next financial year.

## Treasurer's Report

The financial position of MIFA improved significantly during the year, with an operating surplus of \$60,883 underpinning equity which now stands at \$155,886. It is important to note that this result has been achieved largely through the greatly increased support of the member organisations, whose contributions rose from \$101,000 in 2008/9 to \$157,000.

However, support from pharmaceutical companies remained an exceptionally important resource for undertaking a variety of projects, including the new MIFA and member-linked websites, a range of policy papers, Schizophrenia Awareness Week and the Parliamentary Friends of Schizophrenia. These project funds reduce the pressure on MIFA infrastructure, which resulted in reduced spending in most 'non-project' areas of administration.

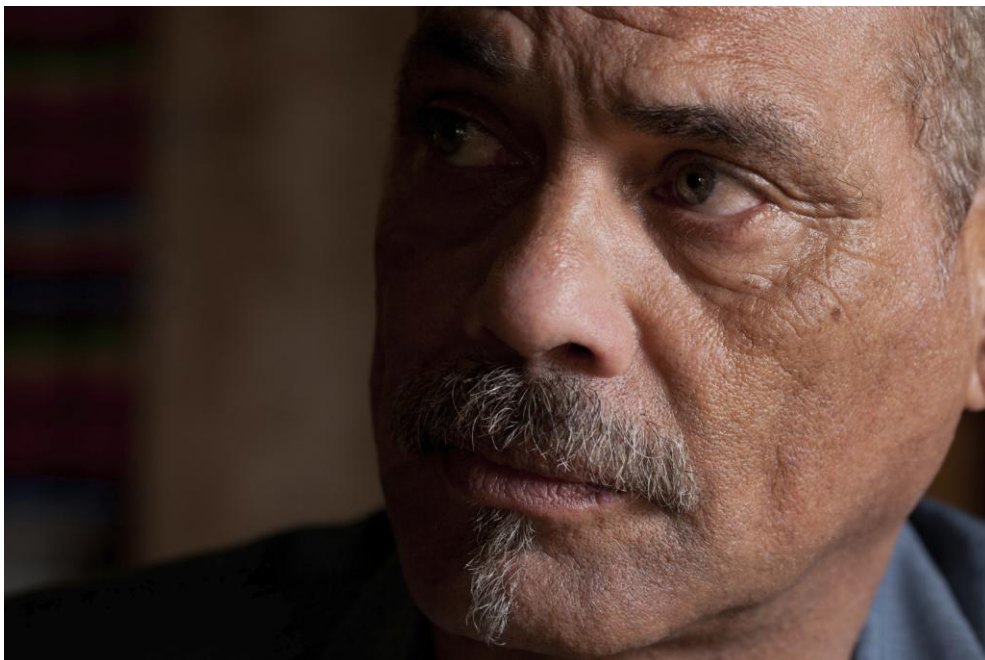
As Treasurer, I have noted the financial challenge that faces MIFA each year in order to sustain its position as a national grassroots representative body in mental health. The Finance and Audit Committee recognises that no new sources of external funding have been secured as yet, and have budgeted for 'standstill' or reduced administrative costs wherever possible for this year. Agreement by MI Fellowship Victoria to take over the lease of the Canberra office, and by MIFSA to continue a 'rent holiday' for MIFA accommodation in its Wayville location, are both extremely helpful in this regard. However, the Committee notes the increased advocacy, consultation with member organisations and higher profile of MIFA this year, and favours modest increases in the staffing of the secretariat where the funds are available.

MI Fellowship Victoria was again contracted to provide a full accounting service, at a cost of \$20,000. My thanks go to Advan and his staff for a responsive and professional approach at all times.

I believe that we have a robust system in place that ensures accountability for the funds that go through the MIFA books and I thank the staff in Adelaide (national support staff) who keep us all honest and timely!

I would like to thank the Finance and Audit Committee, Ken Meissner, Liz Crowther, Advan Hadzic and David Meldrum who have provided me with support and advice ensuring the best possible use of the funds MIFA has available.

Bronwyn Russell  
Treasurer



## Our Member Organisations

### **Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria**

Telephone: 03 8486 4200

[www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)

### **ARAFMI Tasmania Inc**

Telephone: 03 6228 7448

[www.arafmitas.org.au](http://www.arafmitas.org.au)

### **Mental Health Carers NT Inc**

Telephone: 08 89481051

[www.mentalhealthcarersnt.org](http://www.mentalhealthcarersnt.org)

### **Mental Illness Fellowship of South Australia Inc**

Telephone: 08 8378 4100

[www.mifsa.org](http://www.mifsa.org)

### **Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc**

Telephone: 02 9879 2600

[www.sfnsw.org.au](http://www.sfnsw.org.au)

### **Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc**

Telephone: 08 9228 0200

[www.mifwa.org.au](http://www.mifwa.org.au)

### **Mental Illness Fellowship NQ Inc**

Telephone: 07 4725 3664

[www.mifnq.org.au](http://www.mifnq.org.au)

### **Mental Illness Fellowship of Queensland Inc**

Telephone: 07 3358 4424

[www.mifq.org.au](http://www.mifq.org.au)



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