

# Minds Together summary

January – June 2024

*Minds Together* is a suite of programs and resources developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of family and friends who support someone experiencing mental health concerns or suicidal distress.

## Consulting family and friends in Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government engaged Everymind to consult with service providers and individuals with lived and living experience to help inform the development of a state-wide implementation plan for *Minds Together* in Tasmania and to identify opportunities for future expansion or adaptation of the program to better meet the needs of support services. The aim was to understand the barriers and enablers perceived by Tasmanian service providers and community members when implementing the *Minds Together* program.



*“Families and friends are not just a resource... to support their loved one...families and friends are people who are impacted and experience trauma and...we don't support them so that they can support their loved one. We support them because they have the right to support. It is a human and citizen right as a person, not just as a support person. And I think that's a big issue with the culture.”*

- Consultation Focus Group Participant

## Project achievements

- Developed a bespoke landing page for Tasmania on the *Minds Together* portal containing a directory of Tasmanian services and supports and access to the *Minds Together* program for family and friends supporting someone who has attempted suicide.
- Consulted with Tasmanian service providers and people with lived and living experience using online surveys and focus groups.



## Research trial completed

The *Minds Together* for family and friends supporting the mental health of paramedics research trial and project have concluded.

Everymind was funded by Movember and The Distinguished Gentleman's Ride Veterans and First Responders Mental Health Grant Program. The final report was provided in May 2024. Seventy-one family and friends engaged with *Minds Together* during the trial. The program was found feasible, acceptable and safe to use.

From October 2023, the research trial was amended to allow program users to 'opt-out' of the research component and remove randomisation. Participants who opted out of the research could access the online program without completing surveys.

An extensive recruitment strategy, including media engagement and paid advertising, achieved high promotional reach (over 1 million in July – December 2023 alone). However, challenges were encountered in translating this reach into research and program participation.

Everymind incorporated the voice of lived experience in all aspects of the program, with ongoing consultation with the Family and Friends Reference Group (FFRG). Feedback from the Expert Advisory Group and FFRG revealed that content featuring lived experience was the most relatable and engaging.





## Contributing to research

**Published paper: *Evaluating a targeted support program for mental health carers: a randomised controlled trial***

This research is the first of its kind to examine whether integrating a social forum into an existing support program provides additional benefits to family and friends supporting a person with depressive or anxiety symptoms.

- Limited participation in the social forum made it impractical to compare outcomes across different groups. However, looking at all participants as one group showed increased coping self-efficacy, decreased carer strain, and improved perceived social support and quality of life over time. It's important to note that these effects cannot be solely attributed to the program.
- The study provided valuable methodological insights into the challenges of engaging and supporting informal carers through online platforms. It highlighted the need for more comprehensive piloting and co-design approaches to develop future programs.
- The study identified opportunities for future research, including the need for better engagement strategies, user-centered designs, and refined evaluation methods to support and measure the impact on carers.

**Published paper: *Mental Health Carers' Support Experiences in Australia: A Mixed Methods Study***

This mixed-method study was the first to investigate the support experiences and needs of carers of a person with depressive or anxiety symptoms living in Australia. The findings contribute to current literature on mental health carers and offer novel and tangible insights into future research and support opportunities.

- The survey found that over half of respondents reported high levels of psychological distress and 63% said they needed more support in understanding and adjusting to the caregiving role.
- Four key themes emerged from interviews describing carers' support experiences and needs: connecting with formal services, responding to the care recipient, connecting socially, and caring for the self.
- The analysis also identified time constraints and stigma as significant support barriers for these carers.



## Community engagement and knowledge sharing

- **National Suicide Prevention Conference**  
Poster presentation detailing the research initiative 'Compassionate connections: Peer support for family and friends supporting someone experiencing suicidal distress'. The research highlighted a significant need for increased peer support options to address stigma, complex navigation of the mental health system, and the importance of flexible support with extended hours to assist those in support roles better.
- **Digital Mental Health Conference**  
E-poster presentation on the barriers to participant engagement when conducting research. The poster discussed potential solutions such as embedding interventions within communities and consulting with stakeholders to address specific barriers and enablers for sustainable implementation.
- **One Door Mental Health Carers Symposium**  
Presented to peer workers and family and friends who support someone experiencing mental health concerns or suicidal distress about the *Minds Together* program. The presentation emphasised the challenges faced by caregivers, such as social isolation and psychological distress, and the importance of flexible support options.
- **Movember Veterans and First Responders**  
Participated in a knowledge-sharing panel discussion about families, friends and significant others.

