



# ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



mental health  
foundation  
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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is my privilege to present the fourth annual report as Board President of the Mental Health Foundation (ACT) for the year covering July 2024 to June 2025.

In last year's review I discussed the challenges that small, not-for-profit community organisations such as MHF face in providing frontline support for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

These challenges remain and our operating environment has not improved in the past 12 months.

Nonetheless, MHF has continued to provide life-changing services to more than 60 participants this year, and I thank our talented and hard-working CEO and his staff for their dedication, initiative and empathy.

While most of our work has continued to be funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the MHF Board has explored ways to diversify our service offering and ensure the organisation has a more sustainable basis so that we can continue to make a difference.

A key initiative this year was the establishment of a new Counselling Service which offers an alternative support model at a reasonable cost in an area where there is considerable demand. The board looks forward to this service growing in future years.

Another key service that MHF believes makes a real difference has been the accommodation

and support program for patients discharged from the Mental Health Unit at the Canberra Hospital which has prevented

homelessness for nearly 200 of our fellow Canberrans. I welcome recent discussions with the ACT Health Directorate at the end of the reporting period to explore new ways that MHF might continue to provide this effective service.

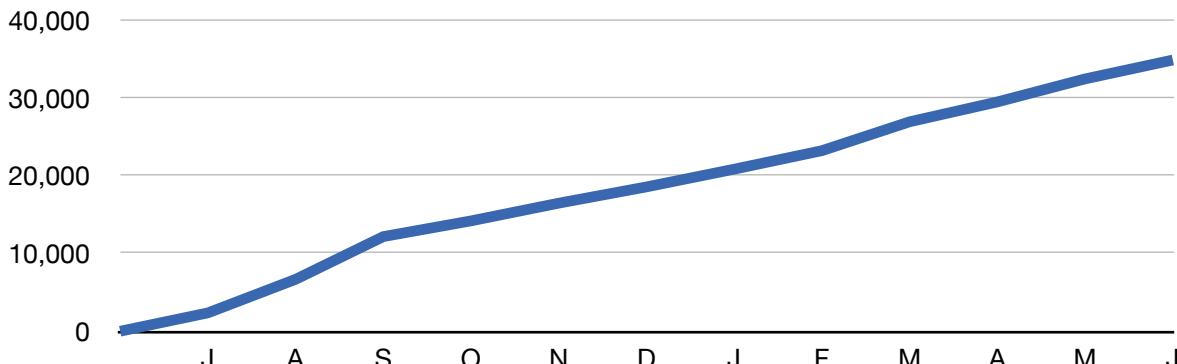
Every board undergoes renewal, and we farewelled two directors who cumulatively provided 20 years of service.

I acknowledge Trixie Makay and Dave Talbot for their significant contributions as Vice-president and Treasurer respectively in what have been challenging times. Following a recruitment process, MHF has welcomed new directors Steven Han, Tim Kapustin, Lyn Murphy and Jo Shapley. These members bring a wide range of expertise in finance, governance and information technology to the directors' table.

I thank our directors for their commitment and look forward to working with them.

Brien Hallett  
President

## *The Board's Strategic Objective: Community Dividend* Total Service Delivery Hours



# TREASURER'S REPORT



It is my privilege to present my first report as Treasurer of the Mental Health Foundation (ACT), following the retirement of long-serving Treasurer, Dave Talbot, who stepped down from the Board during

the year after more than a decade of service. On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge Dave's significant contribution to MHF's governance and financial stewardship over many years.

The 2024-25 financial year was a challenging one for MHF from a fiscal perspective. The organisation recorded a deficit of **\$133,000** compared with the prior year deficit of **\$39,000**. This outcome reflects a confluence of external pressures and strategic investment decisions that have shaped the organisation's financial performance.

The most significant contributor was the substantial reduction in funding for the Mental Health Discharge Accommodation Program (DAP). As highlighted in the CEO and Business Development Manager reports, this program has long been a cornerstone of MHF's community impact and provided a sound financial foundation. The reduction in support has not only created challenges for service delivery but also had a marked impact on our financial results.

Our core NDIS-funded services also continue to face margin pressures. NDIS funding models have not kept pace with rising costs, particularly in psychosocial supports, and this has further constrained our financial performance.

In addition, the rollout of a new counselling service, while a strategically important initiative for diversifying our revenue base, contributed to the deficit by **\$37,000** in its first year of operation. This investment was anticipated by the board, as new services take time to establish and grow. The early uptake of the service has been modest but MHF remain confident that it will play an important role in MHF's future sustainability once it reaches scale.

Equity at year end was **\$624,000**, down from **\$758,000** in the previous year. While these

## *MHF by the Numbers*

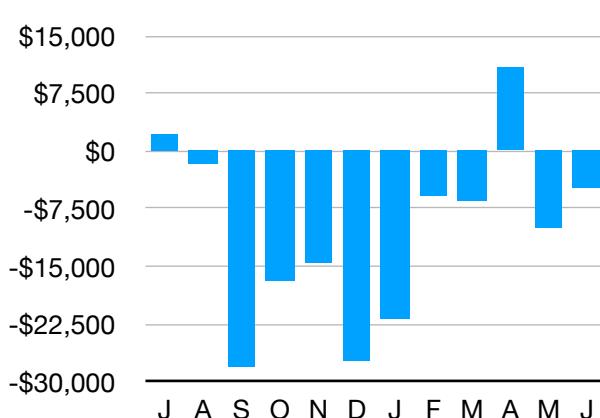
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,015,518</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,149,409</b>
<b>Deficit</b>	<b>\$133,891</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$624,887</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$228,179</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$624,887</b>

figures demonstrate the challenges of the past year, they also highlight the importance of MHF's modest reserves, which provide a degree of resilience during periods of financial strain. Whilst this provides short term relief, MHF must address the operational deficits in coming years.

Despite the deficit, MHF's finance team and leadership managed expenditure prudently, ensuring resources were directed toward frontline service delivery. The external audit again provided an unmodified opinion, though it is clear that addressing sustainability remains a priority. It is a strategic pillar for MHF and the Board and management are working diligently to build MHF in a sustainable manner.

I extend my thanks to Angie Farthing and the finance team, and our CEO, Chris Ward. MHF continues to manage its financial and regulatory obligations professionally despite a tight operating environment and limited resources.

Tim Kapustin  
Treasurer



# CEO'S REPORT



Working alongside the wonderful team at MHF throughout the last year has again been a privilege and a source of great enjoyment. Our people are

everything and we work hard each day to build a strong, supported and happy team. The mental health sector remains a demanding and sometimes stressful environment. It is made manageable, and often inspiring by the commitment and compassion of our staff. Their efforts underpin every achievement during a challenging year.

This financial year was one of consolidation and innovative growth into new areas. We were determined to strengthen our foundations while pursuing new opportunities to increase our impact. A significant milestone was the establishment of new counselling and case management services. These initiatives represents an important step in diversifying our service offering and revenue base while meeting a clear community need for accessible and affordable counselling. The early response has been encouraging, and we look forward to

importance of continuing to broaden our income streams and service models so that we can sustain our mission in the long term.

The Mental Health Discharge Accommodation Program (DAP) funded by the ACT Government remained a critical part of our work, though it too faced considerable challenges this year following reductions in funding. This program has a direct and immediate impact on people who would otherwise face homelessness upon leaving Canberra's Hospitals. In response to the funding setback, MHF worked closely with the

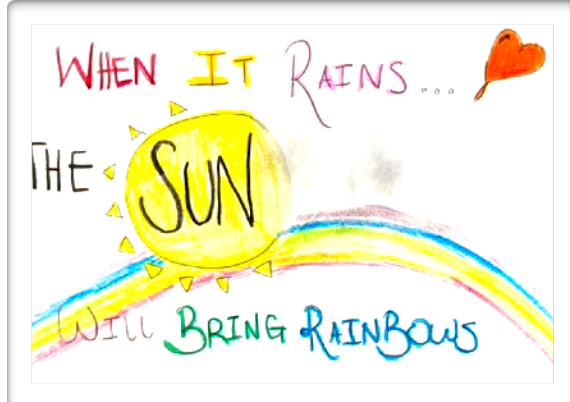
*This financial year was one of consolidation and innovative growth into new areas.*

ACT Health Directorate and directly with the minister's office to highlight the program's demonstrated success and advocate for its continuation. By year end, these discussions had gained traction, giving us reason for cautious optimism about its future.

Pleasingly, MHF successfully completed reaccreditation for both the NDIS Practice Standards and the National Mental Health Standards. These achievements reflect our ongoing commitment to quality, safety, and best practice, as well as the dedication of our staff to maintaining the highest standards of service delivery.

MHF are fortunate to have modest reserves and the continuing support of the I'Anson Trust and other donors and supporters such as Givit and OzHarvest. These resources provide us with some flexibility to explore new initiatives and navigate funding uncertainties without taking on debt, but further work is needed to shore up our long term sustainability.

Looking ahead, MHF will focus on growing our new counselling and case management services, strengthening our partnerships, and securing the sustainability of the DAP. With a capable, dedicated team and a clear sense of purpose, I am confident that we can build on this year's successes and continue to deliver on our strategic pillars and provide life changing support to our community.



Inspiration from DAP Client

building on this momentum in the years ahead.

Our NDIS work remains a vital core of the organisation. The structural challenges persist at a national level and impact the entire sector greatly. Margins continue to be squeezed as the federal government grapples with unexpected participant growth. On the other side of the model, psychosocial supports within the scheme face increasing pressure with participant plans and individual support being reduced. For MHF, this reinforces the

Chris Ward  
CEO

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

## Turning Strategy into Operations



The 2024–25 financial year has been a year of both challenge and opportunity for the Mental Health Foundation (ACT). While our operating environment remains complex, MHF has continued to strengthen its reputation as a trusted partner in providing community based mental health supports across the ACT. From accommodation and community connection to new counselling and emerging case management initiatives, the organisation has worked to expand its impact while maintaining high quality services.

### Accommodation Services

MHF expanded its portfolio to eight properties across during the year, offering stable housing options to people living with mental ill health. In a rental market that remains stretched, these homes meet a critical and immediate need. Most residents live semi-independently,

supported by MHF staff according to their NDIS plans. The long-term tenure of many residents speaks to the quality of care and trust developed over years of partnership.



One of our Homes

Our accommodation work also included delivery of the Discharge Accommodation

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Program (DAP), providing emergency, short-term housing for people leaving one of Canberra's hospitals. While funding reductions created real challenges, MHF advocated strongly to the ACT Health Directorate and the Minister's office for the program's continuation. By year's end, conversations were progressing in a positive direction, giving us confidence that the program's future can be secured and expanded.

## Community Connection Services

While accommodation remains central to our mission, MHF supports far more people in their own homes than in our properties. At any given time, around 50 participants access NDIS funded services through MHF. These range from a few hours per month to intensive, ongoing support for some participants.

Services such as Assistance with Access, Assistance with Daily Life, and Community Participation provide vital pathways for people to remain engaged with their communities and maintain independence. Respite Accommodation continues to provide short term relief for participants and families, while our Support Coordination, Mentoring and Recovery Coaching services enable participants to make informed choices, strengthen their autonomy, and build confidence in daily living.

Together, these services reflect MHF's holistic approach of providing not only shelter but also the tools, confidence, and community connections that enable long term wellbeing.

## New Case Management Program

MHF has also begun exploratory work with the ACT Government in delivering a Case Management program. While in its infancy, this relationship with ACT Property presents a meaningful opportunity to broaden MHF's role in supporting vulnerable Canberrans, complementing our accommodation and counselling services.

## New Counselling Service

This year saw the launch of a new counselling service, a significant milestone in diversifying MHF's service model. The early uptake has been modest, but clients responded positively to the accessibility, affordability, and professionalism of the service. This new service offers people another option to the mental well being and we're excited to build this new area sustainably in coming years.



Counselling Room

## Our People

None of these outcomes would be possible without our frontline staff. Their resilience, compassion, and professionalism remain the heartbeat of MHF. As demand for mental health services grows, the dedication of our 25+ staff ensures that MHF continues to deliver high-quality, person-centred support every day.

We introduced a Career Pathway Plan during the year to support our people with training and experience to grow into their careers. MHF sees this as a valuable community contribution, building the workforce of tomorrow.

We complement our paid staff with regular placements for students undertaking tertiary training. This too is a valuable community service and a way MHF can broaden the services we offer the mental health sector.

## Future Focus

Looking ahead, MHF will continue to advocate for sustained funding of the Discharge Accommodation Program, grow our counselling service, and bed down the case management pilot. These initiatives, alongside our core NDIS services, will strengthen our capacity to meet complex needs and ensure that MHF remains both impactful and sustainable into the future.

Peter Lennon  
Business Development Manager

## **Acknowledgements**

Mental Health Foundation ACT acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and sovereign Custodians of this land. We acknowledge this land was never ceded and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We are committed to providing inclusive and appropriate support for First Nations people, their kin and community impacted by mental health concerns.

MHF ACT also acknowledges people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health and recovery. We acknowledge and value the experience of people who have been carers, families, or supporters.

We are committed to our vision that all people live with hope, choice, control and good mental health.