

## Media statement

2 December 2016

### Grants help break down barriers, build connections

Queensland's Mental Health Commission is helping to break down barriers and build social connections through its grants supporting people with disability and mental illness.

Marking the **International Day of People with Disability** (3 December), the grants include a physical activity initiative and a theatre production that focus on mental illness and mental wellness.

Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck confirmed more than \$88,000 for two organisations under the Commission's \$660,000 *Stronger Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Grants Program 2015-16*.

Brisbane-based Indel-ABILITY Arts Ltd will bring to the stage a new performance work designed for secondary schools called *I love me just the way I am*. With a cast of performers with lived experience of mental illness or intellectual disability, it follows on from the group's successful inaugural production this year, called *Look Mum...No Hands!! (The Legless Bar Years)*.

Co-Artistic Director Rebecca Roberts said: "Our goal is to create a work specifically aimed at high school students and the community that shines a light on mental illness versus mental wellness."

The production is currently in development with performances at a number of Brisbane schools and community arts centres planned for next year.

The Commission has also supported a program of social exercise options for people with intellectual impairment coordinated by Karakan, a not for profit organisation that specialises in supporting people who experience mental illness or a disability, or both.

The "*Healthy Minds and Bodies*" initiative will develop a number of locally-run exercise and social interaction opportunities in South Brisbane, Logan City and Redland City for people with intellectual disability and mental illness.

Karakan General Manager Paul Booker said: "The social component of the program will ensure that people not only achieve the physical benefits of exercise but they will also be encouraged to increase their social circles in order to reduce levels of withdrawal and isolation."

Dr van Schoubroeck said both the arts and physical activity initiatives provided pathways to increase social inclusion.

Dr van Schoubroeck said: "Almost half (48%) of people aged under 65 years with severe or profound disability are also living with mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>"

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2010) *Health of Australians with disability health status and risk factors: Bulletin 83*

People who live with disability are more vulnerable to exposure to a number of key risk factors, such as low access to education, work or housing, social isolation, and experiences of stigma and discrimination.

“Mental health and physical health are fundamentally linked. People with severe mental illness are more likely to be obese, have significant physical illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and engage in risky lifestyle activities such as smoking, drug and alcohol use and poor diet,” Dr van Schoubroeck said.

“We know that taking a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing includes consideration of physical and social factors that impact on a person’s individual circumstances.

“That is why the Commission is pleased to support these two initiatives and to acknowledge the importance of International Day of People with Disability as part of our approach to mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention.”

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**About QMHC:** The Queensland Mental Health Commission was established to improve the mental health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders by driving ongoing reform.

For information on:

- **Karakan** Healthy Minds and Bodies initiatives contact Paul Booker (07) 3299 1898
- **Indel-ABILITY Arts** contact Catarina Hebbard on 0418 719 618 or [info@indelabilityarts.com](mailto:info@indelabilityarts.com)



Caption: Indel-ABILITY Arts troupe breaking down barriers

Please credit: Nick Morrissey