



7 February 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

Suffers of mental illness and homelessness offered new lifeline with PHaMs in Greater Dandenong

925 people in the Dandenong District having no place to call home on any one night and the incidence of mental illness within that community also running high, ARAFEMI Victoria is proud to be opening a new office in Dandenong in order to provide the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program (PHaMs) to the Greater Dandenong region. PHaMs help people with mental illness overcome social isolation and increase their connections to the community.

PHaMs is a core component of the Australian Government's Mental Health initiative. The PHaMs program aims to provide practical and emotional support to people aged 16 and over at risk of/or homeless suffering from mental illness. Individuals that fall into this group are able to join the program and work with their own Personal Helper and Mentor to build the skills and ability to obtain stable accommodation for themselves and lead a fulfilling life in the community.

The new ARAFEMI office, located in the heart of Dandenong, means PHaMs will be 'on the ground' to help people within the Dandenong community. PHaMs workers will provide a wide range of support services including general advocacy, coaching and training.

"For some, living in Greater Dandenong can be bleak," says ARAFEMI Executive Director Frances Sanders. "Greater Dandenong has the highest rates of housing financial stress, highest levels of unemployment and highest rates of substance abuse when compared to other regions around not only Victoria, but Australia. It is understandable that people end up homeless or end up suffering from a mental illness. By having the new office in Dandenong we will be able to provide one-on-one assistance to those in need. We take the time to get to know each individual and support them on their unique recovery journey."

For over 30 years ARAFEMI has worked with people that have mental illnesses and supported those people that care for them. ARAFEMI has proven skills and expertise working with highly marginalised homeless communities that face complex issues, in addition to their mental illness.

According to PHaMs Team Leader Debra Sariman, "ARAFEMI is 100% committed to improving housing options for people who experience mental illness and drug and alcohol issues in Dandenong. Opening the Dandenong office is our stake in the ground. We are looking forward to making a real impact within the Greater Dandenong region."

An official opening of the new ARAFEMI Dandenong office will take place on Tuesday 15 February from 10.30am-12.30pm. To attend contact Debra Sariman on 9791 1088 or email debra.sariman@arafemi.org.au

For interview arrangements and further information contact:

ARAFEMI

Frances Sanders
Executive Director
T: 9810 9300 F: 9810 9399
E: frances.sanders@arafemi.org.au

Debra Sariman
PHaMs Team Leader
T: 03 9791 1088 F: 9706 8587
E: debra.sariman@arafemi.org.au

About ARAFEMI

ARAFEMI is a non-profit community based organisation, which works from a recovery perspective. It is unique as it houses both the peak support agency for carers of people with a mental illness and a broad range of consumer services.

Our mission is to promote and improve the well being of people affected by mental illness.
For more information about ARAFEMI go to www.arafemi.org.au
For more information about PHaMs go to www.arafemi.org.au/programs-services/phams.html