

Welcome to



ermha
partners in recovery

Our values

Excellence

We perform our work to the highest standards. In order to meet those standards we engage in ongoing reflective practice, education and professional development. This ensures that our client-partners will always benefit from our best efforts.

Integrity

We honour our commitments to the community we serve. We maintain trust in our interactions with others by completing the things that we agree to and agreeing to undertake only those things that we believe should and can be done.

Equity

We adhere to the right of all people to be treated fairly. In particular we treat each client in an unprejudiced manner.

Respect

We have high regard for our client-partners and co-workers. This spirit strengthens the bonds between us. It means we accept each person's unique nature and the contribution they make to the work we do.

Honesty

We maintain honesty by seeking to understand and value each view of a given situation and utilising our values to guide our actions and interactions.

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About Ermha

Ermha is a community based organisation that supports recovery and instils hope for people who are experiencing the effects of a severe mental illness. Ermha clients may also have complex needs associated with a disability, substance abuse or housing instability. We recognise that each client has their own strengths, needs, desires and aspirations, and our range of programs are designed accordingly.

One of the first things people become aware of is that at Ermha we keep mental illness in perspective. It is just one part of our clients' lives, even though at times it may be experienced as overwhelming. Our clients' strengths get the focus they deserve and as we assist people to reduce the effects of a mental illness we encourage them to explore new approaches to life.

At the heart of everything Ermha does is a deep respect for the people who use our services. It takes hope, courage and commitment to seek a brighter future.

What does Ermha do?

Ermha provides psychosocial rehabilitation services. "Psychosocial" refers to the connection between a person and his or her community. "Rehabilitation" means to restore, renew and change. Psychosocial rehabilitation promotes recovery, full community integration and improved quality of life for people who are experiencing a mental illness that seriously impairs their ability to lead meaningful lives.

How does Ermha do its work?

Ermha provides clients with opportunities to acquire the personal and practical skills they need to reach their goals. One thing we ask of all clients is to create, with our support, an Individual Support Plan (ISP). This is a plan that lists a client's goals and ways to reach them. Clients' goals vary greatly. For example one client might want to improve day-to-day living skills. Another client might want to continue his or her education. Yet another might want to build or repair relationships. At Ermha we focus on clients' strengths and we encourage them to use those strengths to create better futures.

Ermha partners with a wide range of other services and collaborates with families and carers because we recognise that a comprehensive system of support gets better results.

What is mental illness?

A mental illness is characterised by disruptive thoughts, feelings and moods that interfere with a person's ability to function and relate to others as he or she wishes to. Most people Ermha supports have a professionally diagnosed mental illness.

What is recovery?

Recovery is different for everyone however one of the most frequently quoted definitions of recovery is from William Anthony (1993) "Recovery is a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even with limitations caused by the illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness".



Why does Ermha use the word “client” to describe people who use its services?

We use the word “client” because it fits better than the alternatives such as “customer” or “consumer” and because it most accurately describes the people we support. In most client/provider relationships it is the client who decides what happens and it is the client who has final say. This is true at Ermha as well.

Is there a time limit on how long I can be an Ermha client?

The answer depends on the program. Some programs provide relatively short term support while others offer longer term and extended support.

Is Ermha part of the hospital system?

No, but we support many clients who require clinical assistance and we partner with clinical services in specific programs.

Who uses Ermha?

All kinds of people become Ermha clients because mental illness affects people regardless of age, race, gender or income. There are exceptions but for the most part our clients have received a professional psychiatric diagnosis. Our clients generally experience moderate to severe symptoms as a result of a mental illness. However, some Ermha programs provide assistance to people regardless of their mental health.

How do I know if Ermha is right for me?

When prospective clients contact us we ask a few general questions to make sure Ermha is the right service to meet your needs. When this is not the case, we do our best to direct you to the most relevant service. If we agree that Ermha can assist you, we will request a meeting to better understand how we can support you. Certain Ermha programs run regular information sessions. Please contact us for more information.

I’m interested. What should I do next?

Contact Ermha. Together we can decide if Ermha’s support is right for you, and if so, what needs to be done to get started.

Mental Health Q&A

Q Are “mental illness” and “psychiatric disability” the same thing?

A The terms psychiatric disability and mental illness are sometimes used interchangeably. Mental illness refers to the actual disorder, while psychiatric disability refers to the impairment a person might experience as a result of a mental illness. Not every person with a mental illness will experience a psychiatric disability.

Q Do people who are experiencing a mental illness ever recover?

A Long-term research has shown that the majority of people with a mental illness show genuine improvement over time and lead stable lives. For some there will be a psychiatric disability. The vast majority of people with a psychiatric disability are able to live independently, and participate in meaningful activity in the community, if given the opportunity and support to do so.

Q Are mental disorders caused by a weakness in character?

A No. Mental disorders are caused by biological, psychological and social factors. Research has shown genetic and biological factors are associated with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and mood disorders like depression. Life traumas such as the loss of a loved one can also contribute to various disorders.

Q Are people who are experiencing a mental illness dangerous or violent?

A Statistics show that there is very little difference in rates of violence between people who are experiencing a mental illness and the general population. People with psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia are far more frequently frightened and anxious rather than violent.

Q Can people who experience a mental illness achieve their goals?

A Many people who are experiencing a mental illness lead full and meaningful lives. Indeed, some of Australia’s most well known citizens have experienced a mental illness such as singer Natalie Imbruglia, actor Garry McDonald and footballer Andrew Johns, to name just a few.

Q What are some common strategies people use to promote their recovery?

A Recovery is an individual experience however most people count attention to diet, exercise and sleep as vital starting points. Maintaining a sense of hope, getting the right support and encouraging positive relationships can also promote recovery.

To become an Ermha client, a person must

- Be between 16 and 65 years of age
- Have a professionally diagnosed mental illness (for most Ermha programs)
- Live in or near the region covered by the program they are joining
- Meet the program-specific eligibility criteria
- Agree to refrain from violent or aggressive behaviour
- Be prepared to participate and work toward their Individual Support Plan (ISP) goals
- Be willing to regularly meet with support workers at mutually agreed times

Our programs have various referral pathways

- Some clients are referred to us by their doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist. Non-clinical workers from other services also refer people to Ermha
- Ermha clients can be referred to other programs within Ermha
- Residential Support (PARCS) clients are referred to us by Southern Health's Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (CATT)
- Several Ermha programs accept self-referrals and referrals made by friends, carers and family members
- Clients of certain programs are referred to us by the Victorian Government Departments of Human Services and Health
- Ermha also conducts assertive outreach where our workers actively seek out people in the community who can benefit from our services

Ermha provides the following services



Operating from bases in Dandenong and Beaconsfield, Ermha's Aspirations day programs are where people come together to learn or relearn the everyday skills that promote recovery. At Aspirations clients choose when they are ready to participate and to what degree. As clients progress, they often take on roles and responsibilities that allow them to practice the skills they can use to find and keep a job, restart their studies or achieve other aims. As recovery progresses clients can test their strengths through personal action. Aspirations is a "safe place to take a risk".



Ermha Barwon provides tailored support packages to people with dual disabilities. The degree to which we support each client varies and is based on clients' needs and aspirations. Each package is individually designed in consultation with the Victorian Department of Human Services together with key stakeholders, including the support recipient and their carer.



Ermha's Outreach programs provide support to people with a mental illness in their homes and communities. Our main aim is to develop and deliver structured social and living skills programs that help clients re-establish abilities in common aspects of everyday life. These can include caring for one's home environment, making and keeping social and recreational contacts and relating to friends, family and people in the wider community.



Ermha Residential Support consists of two Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) facilities, one in Springvale and one in Clayton. Both are short-stay facilities that provide 24 hour support to people who are experiencing a mental illness and whose symptoms are becoming more severe but who do not require hospitalisation. Conversely, we support people who have been discharged from hospital but who are not quite ready to live independently.





Ermha Respite provides a range of respite options for carers of people with a mental illness, psychiatric disability or intellectual disability, and their care recipients. We endeavour to meet the respite needs of carers and care recipients by identifying and facilitating a range of respite options that serve individual needs and circumstances. These options can include group holidays, individual packages, and recreational activities. One of our main priorities is to assist carers of people with high dependency needs, complex care needs and challenging behaviours.



Ermha Restart supports people who are experiencing their first episode of a severe mental illness. Clients of the Restart program work in groups with their peers and/or on a one-to-one basis with Ermha support workers to re-learn general life skills and social skills that promote recovery. As clients recover they use our support to gain a new sense of life's possibilities and ways to explore them. We offer opportunities for creative expression, outings, conversation and exercise, all of which contribute to new ways of seeing the world and to a brighter future.



Linx Outreach is comprised of two services – Moderate Support and the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) program. The Moderate Support program designs and delivers tailored support for people who require a high level of assistance to maintain stable housing and achieve their recovery goals. Ermha's ABI clients, as well as having an acquired brain injury, also experience difficulties related to, for example, physical health, housing and employment. Linx Outreach support staff engage other services to assist clients as they develop skills that help them recover and live independently in the community.



Ermha's MadCap Cafés exist to achieve one goal - to assist people who are experiencing a mental illness who want to enter, or re-enter, the workforce. And we do it by focussing on what people can do, not what they can't. MadCap Café provides a six month transitional employment training program that offers consistent, professional support, real on-the-job experience and a "no wrong step" approach. We provide supported opportunities to learn and master the social and job skills that promote self-confidence and competence that can lead to the jobs our trainees want.



Origins supports people who are experiencing a mental illness and who come from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Origins assists clients to make the best use of community resources and also introduces them to other Ermha programs that provide different support opportunities. For example, Origins clients can join our Aspirations day program which offers, among other resources, pre-vocational and job-training support. Origins uses an outreach approach (one-to-one, home-based support) and we also support clients in small groups.



Pathways Connect 50 Plus provides case-managed support to clients who are 50 years and over who require monitoring of their health and wellbeing as well as support to access and maintain public housing. This program has been specifically designed for older people who are about to enter direct tenure public housing through the priority segments of the Office of Housing Segmented Waiting List. The Program also supports current Office of Housing residents. The aim of the program is to assist clients to maintain stable, long-term housing, improve clients' health and wellbeing, encourage and support clients to make decisions regarding their use of services, and manage their health and welfare needs.



Pathways connect identifies and promotes better housing and health outcomes for people with complex needs who are leaving psychiatric inpatient settings or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Pathways Connect is made up of two programs, Mental Health Pathways, and Community Connections. Community Connections uses an assertive outreach approach to identify people who are experiencing a mental illness or who have complex unmet needs, and who are homeless or living in insecure accommodation. Mental Health Pathways works with people who are current in-patients at Southern Health's Dandenong, Casey and Monash psychiatric hospitals, and who are at risk of homelessness when discharged.



Pathways Support and Connect provides support to maintain SRS (Supported Residential Service) viability and to promote the wellbeing of SRS residents. Pathways Support and Connect assists residents who require a greater level of care and encourages stronger ties between SRS's and other services of benefit to residents. Pathways Support and Connect workers identify and assist SRS residents who have unmet health needs, require complex care and/or whose behaviour causes instability within the SRS. Support workers also assist SRS proprietors to better manage residents' needs.



Recovery Packages provide medium to long term support for people who are experiencing a mental illness and who have an Individual Support Package. Individual Support Packages are provided to clients who have multiple or complex needs and who are currently receiving assistance from the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS). Recovery Packages provide a wraparound service that comprises individualised support, case management and crisis response. This tailored, comprehensive approach seeks to identify clients' support needs early and address them effectively.



STEPS Care Coordinators assist to establish and monitor care teams that support clients with a severe mental illness and high and complex needs. Care Coordination can assist care teams by providing service system connections, support and oversight. Steps Care Coordinators actively engage local service providers in the development and delivery of the various elements of the individual's support plan. The Care Coordinator actively participates in service coordination across programs to resolve systemic issues and identify more effective ways of meeting client needs.



STEPS IHBOS is designed to provide comprehensive, wrap around packages of support to clients with high and complex needs, and to create partnerships between clinical and community services to improve client outcomes. IHBOS provides everyday support to clients to develop and improve practical skills such as assisting with grocery shopping and meal planning. Staff support clients to access specialist assistance and to maintain and retain accommodation and independence in their communities. We also assist clients to better understand their illness and their treatment options.

How Ermha protects your privacy

Ermha is committed to protecting personal and health information in accordance with

- The Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and the National Privacy Principles under that Act
- The Victorian Health Records Act 2001 and the Health Privacy Principles under that Act.

These laws and regulations are incorporated into Ermha's policies and procedures to ensure that all personal information is handled sensitively and securely. Ermha only records information with clients' consent and will only use and disclose information for the primary purpose for which it was collected.

What information do we record about you?

The information we require in order to provide support varies according to the program you are a part of and the goals you create as part of your support plan.

Who can see your information?

Your information can only be seen by the professionals in this service who are involved with the support we provide to you. Otherwise, we can only release information about you if you agree or if required by law (such as in the case of a medical emergency). We supply funding bodies with anonymous client data for statistical purposes.

What say do you have in what happens to your information?

You have a say in what happens to your information. We rely on the information you give us to provide you with the right support. It is your right to deny Ermha staff access to this information but this may affect our ability to provide you with the best possible service. Talk to your support worker if you wish to cancel or change the conditions of your consent.

How will information about you be protected?

Ermha is committed to protecting the confidentiality of your records. Security measures are in place and all personnel who handle personal and health information have a duty of care to protect your records from unauthorised access, use or disclosure. When information is no longer required to be held it is destroyed.

Can you access your information?

You have the right to access the information Ermha has about you and to ask for it to be changed or corrected. Ermha will provide you with access to your information within three working days of receiving your written request. Requests for access to information are made to Ermha's Privacy Officer and are subject to the exceptions set out in the two Acts mentioned above.

Improving our service

As an Ermha client you will have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of your Individual Support Plan (ISP) and in the ongoing development of Ermha. Ermha regularly evaluates its performance and has a policy of encouraging all clients to take part in that process.

You can contribute to Ermha's policies and procedures by

- Submitting ideas directly to staff, verbally or in writing
- Writing to the CEO or the Ermha Executive Team
- Attending advertised forums and committees
- Becoming a voting member of Ermha
- Standing for election as a member of the Ermha Board
- Participating in meetings held by Ermha in relation to programs and other areas of service provision

Feedback, complaints and appeals

Ermha is committed to client satisfaction and to the provision of quality services. Complaints and feedback are valuable tools we use to meet our commitment to quality improvement throughout the organisation. As a client, carer, family member or other service provider we encourage you to discuss any issue you might have with Ermha's provision of services. Your matters will be attended to in a fair, equitable and timely manner.

How do I provide feedback, make a complaint or appeal a decision at Ermha?

Ermha has a formal Complaint Policy and Procedure which ensures the rights and confidentiality of clients, or any complainant, are maintained. We will investigate all complaints in line with Ermha's Complaints Policy. Please note that we are unable to acknowledge any complaint or feedback without your contact details. Anonymous complaints will be investigated but if this is the case we will be unable to inform you of the outcome.

To make a complaint, appeal a decision or to provide us with your feedback you have 2 options.

1. You can verbally report your complaint or provide feedback to an Ermha staff member
 2. You can provide us with your hand written complaint or feedback by completing the attached form and hand delivering or posting it directly to our Head Office. Complaints forms are available on the Ermha website (www.ermha.org), at any Ermha office and at the rear of this brochure. To submit the form online you must have a valid email address. If you do not have a valid email address please download, print and complete the form and return it to us at 67 Robinson Street Dandenong VIC 3175.
- If your complaint or feedback cannot be resolved initially, the matter should be referred to the Practice Leader or Supervisor of the program
 - If the matter is still not able to be resolved it should be referred to the relevant Program Manager or Director



What will Ermha do with your feedback, complaint or appeal?

In line with our complaints policy we will

- Record the matter with our complaints officer in the complaints register and, if necessary, forward your comments to the relevant contact person for further follow up
- Deal with your matter respectfully and in a timely manner
- Provide an interpreter when necessary
- Acknowledge your communication within 48 hours of receipt
- Investigate and respond within 14 working days of receipt. If the matter cannot be addressed within this timeframe we will keep you informed of our progress at regular intervals until all necessary processes and investigations have been completed

What happens if I am not satisfied with the way Ermha has handled my feedback, complaint or appeal?

If the procedures we offer do not resolve your concerns, or if you are unhappy with the way Ermha has handled your matter, you may seek advice from the following agencies:

For All Services

Ombudsman Victoria
Telephone: (03) 9613 6222 or
Toll Free: 1800 806 314 (Regional Only)
Level 9, 459 Collins Street (North Tower)
Melbourne VIC 3000

Health Services Commissioner
Telephone: (03) 8601 5200 or
Toll Free: 1800 136 066
TTY: 1300 550 275
30th Floor, 570 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Equal Opportunity Commissioner
Telephone: 1300 292 153
Level 3, 204 Lygon Street
Carlton VIC 3053

Privacy Commissioner
Telephone: 1300 363 992
www.privacy.gov.au

Disability Services

Disability Services Commissioner
Toll Free: 1800 677 342
TTY: 1300 726 563
Level 30, 570 Bourke Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000

Offices of the Public Advocate
Telephone: 1300 309 337
TTY: (03) 9603 9529
PO Box 13175
Law Courts VIC 8010

National Disability Abuse and
Neglect Hotline
Toll Free: 1800 880 052
TTY: 1800 301 130
NRS: 1800 555 677
TIS: 131 450

Withdrawal of service

Ermha will withdraw services if you

- Voluntarily leave the service or move from the regions in which Ermha operates
- Agree to be referred to a more appropriate service. Your support worker will assist you with the process of referral, and, with your permission, supply any information necessary to make your transition easier
- Make no contact with the service for 3 months or more
- Consistently fail to keep appointments with your support worker
- Refuse to work on the agreed goals of your Individual Support Plan
- Behave in a manner that threatens or endangers staff or other clients

Having an advocate

You have the right to have an advocate present to assist you at any time. An advocate is someone who assists you to ensure your support needs are addressed appropriately. For more information speak to any Ermha support worker.

Right to decline services

You have the right to decline our support at any time. Declining our support will not prejudice you in any way. Should you decline Ermha's support you can still access Ermha services in the future.



Clients' rights at Ermha

Clients have the right to

- Be respected for their individual human worth and dignity
- Be treated with courtesy
- Be assessed for access to our services without discrimination
- Be informed and consulted about available services and other relevant matters
- Be part of decisions made about their support
- Pursue any complaint about service provision without retribution
- Involve an advocate of their choice
- Receive high quality services
- Access all of their personal information
- Appeal a decision
- Participate in program activity
- Influence decision making
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Have services provided by staff with relevant skills, training and experience
- Refuse our services

Clients are responsible for

- The decisions made, together with an Ermha worker, about their Individual Support Plan (ISP)
- Giving any information to support workers which may assist in the development and implementation of clients' ISPs
- Attending appointments arranged with their support worker
- Respecting the rights of others who use Ermha's services
- Maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of other clients
- Respecting the rights of Ermha staff
- Attending meetings and events at Ermha free from the influence of alcohol and non-prescription drugs

Other Community Services

Life Line	131 114
Suicide Help Line	1300 651 251
DirectLine Drugs & Alcohol Support	1800 888 236
Southern Health's Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team (CATT) Triage	1300 369 012
Centrelink	1800 050 004
Mental Health Advice Line	1300 280 737
Careline (Carers Respite Services)	1800 052 222

Ermha's vision

To be a leader in the mental health services sector through the provision of high quality services that promote, develop and sustain the independence and community inclusion of those who have or may acquire a severe mental illness.

Ermha's mission

To open up a world of opportunity for people who are experiencing a mental illness to participate and thrive in the community of their choice.

Ermha values your feedback. You can use the attached form to lodge a complaint, give us your feedback or make suggestions.

Your support worker _____

Program _____

Contact _____



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