

24 February 2018

## Commissioner's message—International Family Drug Support Day 2018

Hello everyone. I'm Ivan Frkovic, Queensland's Mental Health Commissioner.

I acknowledge the traditional owners on the land on which we meet today.

Welcome to the International Family Drug Support Day 2018.

The CEO of Family Drug Support Australia, Tony Trimmingham, has said on many occasions that:

***'behind every statistic of a drug-related overdose, death, arrest or hospitalisation, there is a family suffering — all too often in a cloud of stigma and shame'.***

International Family Drug Support Day is an opportunity for us all to:

- Tackle the stigma and shame experienced by families;
- Recognise that families need to be heard and supported, and
- Encourage families to speak up about their concerns and needs.

It is our collective responsibility to listen and respond.

As you know, no family is immune from being affected.

Drug use touches families of all kinds.

- Where you live
- what you do for a living, or
- your background does not protect from the harmful impact of problematic alcohol and drug use.

People who use alcohol and other drugs and their families are often misrepresented, stereotyped and discriminated against.

As a result they struggle with speaking up or knowing where to turn for help.

Frequently they become isolated from family, friends and community.

International Family Drug Support Day gives us an opportunity to let affected families know that support is available and to encourage them to reach out.

In the past 12 months, the Queensland Mental Health Commission has travelled across the state to talk to Queenslanders about a renewed QLD MHAOD Strategic Plan. .

Families caring for a person with problematic alcohol and drug use told us:

- That they find it difficult to get the information and help they need.
- That they experienced stigma, just as their family member with problematic use does.
- That stigma had a profound impact on their ability to seek help.
- That they are worried about seeking help because they are worried about being labelled as 'bad parents' or 'bad families'.
- That they need to be supported to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.
- That they need help to understand and navigate the complex system—particularly unfamiliar system such as Child Safety and the Criminal Justice System.

We understand from families that many experience significant:

- frustration
- confusion
- anger
- fear and
- hopelessness, when they are supporting a loved one.

Families also indicated that their caring role disrupted their family life; ability to work and increased their own risk of physical and mental health problems.

Please be assured that your needs will be considered in the renewed Queensland Mental Health and Alcohol and other Drug Strategic Plan.

I want to reach out to all those families who came to the consultation and others to let you know that your needs have been heard by the Commission and will be taken into consideration as part of the development of a renewed Queensland Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan.

I would also like to welcome the Queensland Government's recent release of the Ice Strategy but also the \$100 million investment to tackle Ice in Queensland. Also as part of that strategy there is a clear focus on supporting the needs of families.

I would like to thank Family Drug Support Australia, its CEO Tony Trimmingham and his hard working staff and volunteers for tirelessly providing support to families all around Australia and for keeping the issue of supporting families in the spotlight for the past 21 years.

The Queensland Mental Health Commission is proud to sponsor this important day once again.

I hope this year's event will raise even greater awareness of the need to support families.