

# Catch 22

**Taking a holistic approach to health.  
The mental health family and friends  
experience in Victoria.**

**Marie Piu**

Chief Executive Officer, Tandem

The trusted voice of family & friends in mental health

**Tandem advocates for involvement in planning  
and care, participation in system change,  
and support for family and friends.**



Tandem acknowledges the support  
of the Victorian Government.

# Key activities

## **Tandem is the Victorian peak body for family and friends in mental health and provides**

- Systemic and individual advocacy.
- Active engagement in a range of metropolitan and rural projects.
- 1800 314 325 support and referral line for family and friends.

## **Tandem participates in**

A range of state, national and stakeholder programs, expert advisory and steering groups and taskforces.

## **Tandem manages**

- The Mental Health Carer Support Fund provides up to \$1,000 per year to carers supporting someone in Victoria's thirty-one Area Mental Health Services.
- The Tandem Victorian Mental Health Carer Register.

## **Tandem supports**

- The Carer Lived Experience Workforce.
- Annual Tandem Awards for Exceptional Service to Family and Friends in Mental Health.

# OUR MENTAL HEALTH CARERS



They are partners,  
children, parents, siblings,  
friends and neighbours.



15% are  
young carers.  
(under 25 years of age)



36 hours  
of support is  
provided per week.

**DID YOU KNOW 60,000 VICTORIANS SUPPORT  
PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?\***

**UNPAID MENTAL  
HEALTH SUPPORT**

=

**\$3.3 BILLION P.A.**



**National statistics,  
Australia 2015\***

- 2.8 million carers
- 240,000 mental health carers
- \$13.2 billion p.a.

\* The economic value of informal mental health caring in Australia: Summary Report 2017



**Carers are often hidden. Children who become carers face particular difficulties in being recognised and having their needs met.**

# Tandem and the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist and Chief Nurse Collaboration

## Victorian response to Equally Well

### Quality of life – equality of life



In February 2018 Tandem was one of the organisations and individuals gathered together by the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist to advise on the Victorian response to Equally Well; quality of life – equality of life.

As part of our contribution, a focus group and follow up interviews were held with Tandem members, particularly those family and friends with in depth knowledge in this area. The topic was explored through a series of questions to provide insight into physical activity and wellbeing for those living with mental health issues, through the lens of family and friends (mental health carers).



## Tandem consultation: Finding 1

Physical and mental health systems do not operate in an integrated way.



He'll say, '*I'd rather not have a blood test*' but they don't work with him after that... they use '*he wont engage*' at the drop of a hat and just stop trying.



Paula, Carer

# Tandem Award for Exceptional Service to Family and Friends in Mental Health

## Chair's Award 2018

**Dr Hanlie Engelbrecht, Dental Surgeon at Dental Health Services Victoria  
at Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne**



As a carer for over 20 years for my son, I have never received such compassionate care as that extended by the oral surgeon, Dr Hanlie Engelbrecht. Getting an unwell person to receive dental surgery is nearly impossible. In an initial consultation and at a surgery appointment, Dr Engelbrecht and her team responded to a most challenging situation with great interpersonal skill and respect. She assisted me to work through an anxious situation with her reassurance and genuine understanding of a carer's issues; I felt she was saying *'I'm here to make it easy for you'*. When it came time for surgery, Dr Engelbrecht and staff presumed that I would come into the theatre until the anaesthetic took effect. I was welcomed, accommodated and supported through the whole process."



## Tandem consultation: Finding 2

It should be an urgent priority for the mental health system to work to alleviate adverse effects of the medications that are the mainstay of the current model of care in the mental health system.



If an ordinary person were to come in with an overeating problem, health care professionals would know how to deal with them. If an ordinary person was treated the way they treat people with mental illness who try to get ‘*help*’ for obesity, it’d drive them mad.

*Julie, Carer*



## Tandem consultation: Finding 3

**Families would like to see increased focus in mental health service on preventative and pro-active measures for physical health and wellbeing.**



In the early days you offer this kind of feedback... but you become jaded, you know how the system works.

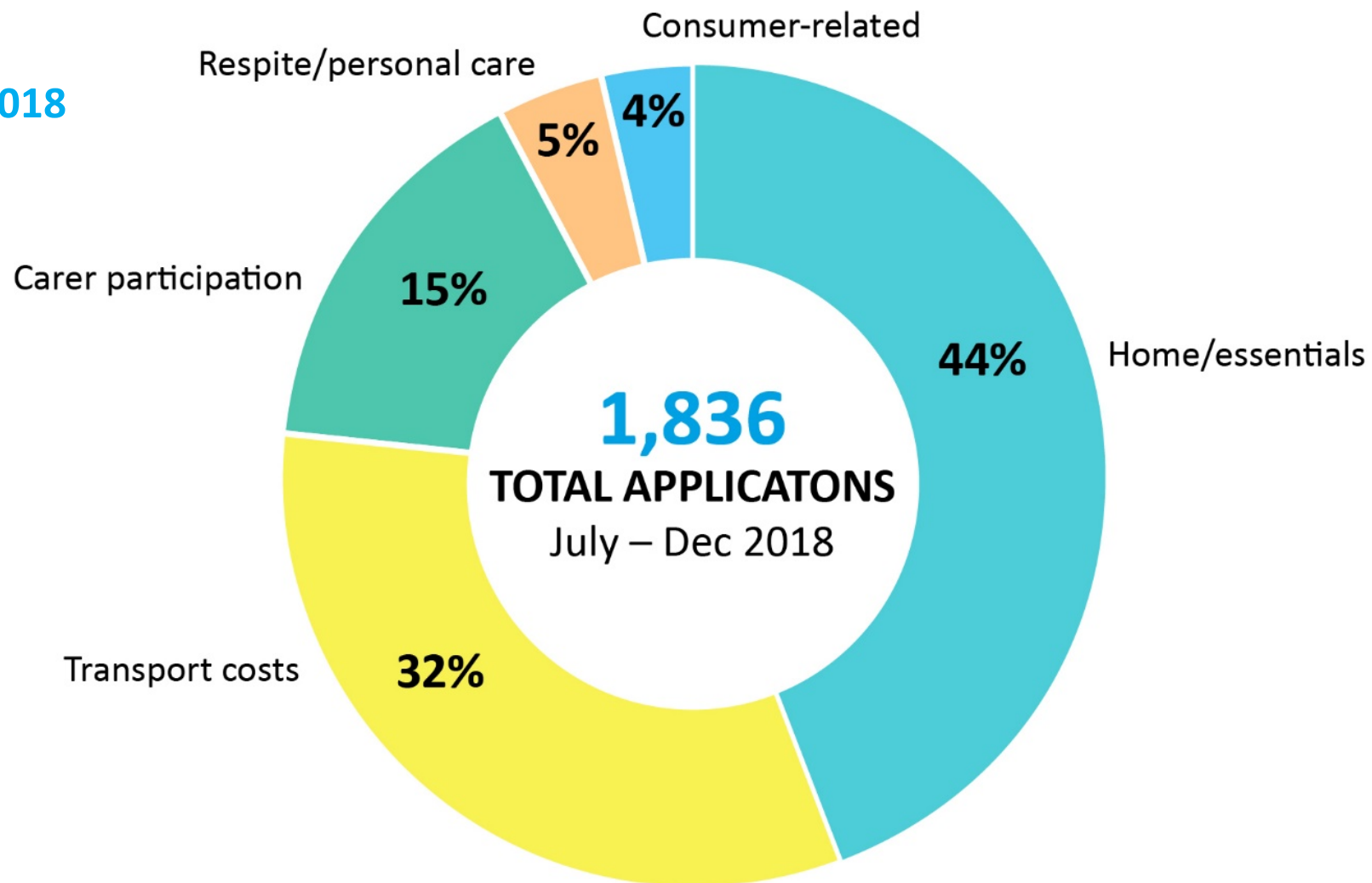


*Carer*

# Victorian Mental Health Carer Support Fund

## Snapshot

July – December 2018



# Tandem reflections and recommendations

## Research confirms that family and friends (carers)

- often provide the bulk of support
- are uniquely placed to impact lifestyle and overall wellbeing of those they support
- provide an invaluable perspective in discussions and strategies to develop and implement lifestyle interventions
- need information, education and support regarding physical health problems from onset
- need guidance on how to communicate sensitive health issues with family members and provide practical strategies that can easily improve physical health
- need support to look after their own physical health and wellbeing.

## Ultimately

Family carers want holistic and integrated approaches to patient wellbeing.

**Thank you!**

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