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## Media Release

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# Message of Hope on Mental Health

## Community Mental Health Delivers Message of Hope and Recovery

Victoria's peak body for community mental health support services has been overwhelmed by the interest in its upcoming conference. The unique conference, *Joining the Dots... Creating Community*, has a strong social inclusion focus and will expose the un-told stories of recovery and hope in a brighter future for people with mental illness.

International keynote speaker and psychiatrist Dr Daniel Fisher will bring this message of hope and recovery from the United States where he is Executive Director of the National Empowerment Centre. Dr Fisher has recovered from schizophrenia. He was hospitalised several times prior to becoming a psychiatrist and is one of only a few psychiatrists in the United States who publicly discusses his recovery from mental illness.

'The great thing about this conference is that it challenges the widely publicised view that people with mental illness are in some way locked into a dark, dead-end future. We've structured this conference, so we can hear from services that are making a difference and consumers who are actively participating in the community,' says Matt Clear, Communications and Membership Manager, Psychiatric Disability Services of Victoria (VICSERV).

Dr Fisher's message of hope and recovery is an important one. He is a role model for others with mental illness - his life dispels the myth that people do not recover from mental illness. His recovery and work in the field were recognised by his selection as a member of the White House Commission on Mental Health.

'This conference comes at an interesting time,' says Mr Clear. 'We're picking up on the theme of social inclusion at the same time the Federal Government are discussing the importance of this approach in addressing disadvantage in the community. We're also riding a wave of new interest in the issue of mental health and mental illness and better ways to support those in the community with mental health issues'.

Other participants/speakers at the conference include:

- Mary O'Hagan, New Zealand Mental Health Commissioner (2000 – 2007) and International consultant in Mental Health,
- Heidi Everett\*, artist and musician,
- Sandy Jeffs\*, award-winning poet who has explored the world of madness through her poetry,
- Arana Pearson\*, facilitator of 'Hearing Voices' workshops.

\* All featured in the ABC TV *Enough Rope Angels and Demons*, special with Andrew Denton.

*Joining the Dots... Creating Community*, Mental Health Conference, runs 8-9 May in Melbourne. More information [www.vicserv.org.au/conference](http://www.vicserv.org.au/conference)

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