



## Mind Medicine Australia celebrates its first anniversary - A year of many achievements, exciting new developments in the pipeline, and special film events in Melbourne and Byron Bay

Mind Medicine Australia (MMA), one of the nation's most progressive mental health charities, celebrates its first anniversary today on Thursday, 13 February 2020. The organisation was established for the development of research-backed and regulatory-approved Medicine-Assisted Therapy—that is, psilocybin and MDMA assisted psychotherapies—in Australia.

It's been a fast-paced year for MMA, and packed with numerous achievements, several of which have paved the way for new and exciting advances for Medicine-Assisted Therapy in 2020. These include Australia's inaugural International Summit on Psychedelic Therapies for Mental Illness coming to Melbourne this November, the country's first Medicine-Assisted Therapist Training Program, and the planning of an Asia-Pacific Centre of Psychedelic Medicine in Australia.

To mark the first-anniversary milestone, two special film events will take place on Wednesday, 19 February, at Cinema Nova in Melbourne. After its premiere screening sold out last year, *Trip of Compassion*, the highly acclaimed Israeli documentary that follows PTSD patients undertaking MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, returns for an encore showing at 6.30pm. The equally popular *Fantastic Fungi*, an eye-opening exploration of the complex and healing nature of the mushroom world, screens separately at 7.15 pm. Both films will be followed by a Q & A, with a panel featuring Peter Hunt AM and Tania de Jong AM, co-founders of MMA, along with Renee Harvey, a clinical psychologist from Imperial College London and psychiatrist Dr Nigel Strauss.

Next month, *Trip of Compassion* will premiere in Byron Bay on Saturday, 7 March, at 8 pm at the Byron Theatre. A Q & A will follow the screening with a panel that includes Steve McDonald, a local army veteran who has been successfully treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with MDMA-assisted psychotherapy. For bookings, visit [mindmedicineaustralia.org/events/](http://mindmedicineaustralia.org/events/).

Peter Hunt AM, Chair of MMA, says there is much to celebrate on the organisation's first anniversary: "10 educational events rolled out nationally to over 2000 people, 40 pieces of editorial coverage in the media, 50 appearances by our team at outreach events, and more than 80 regular financial donors secured. MMA has been enormously successful so far in raising awareness and support for Medicine-Assisted Therapy in Australia. As we begin our second year of operations, and as our vision continues to grow, we ask the public, government, medical community and corporate leaders for further help, so that we can move several steps closer to making this treatment available to the millions of Australians suffering from mental illnesses."

Tania de Jong AM, Executive Director of MMA, agrees that significant progress has been made over the past year in fostering public approval for the availability of Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapy in Australia. "We have seen a tide-change in the curiosity about the use of these therapies for depression, anxiety, PTSD, addiction, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anorexia, dementia and other mental illnesses. In response to this mounting public interest, we have worked closely with key stakeholders to expedite several initiatives that will help to introduce Psilocybin-assisted and MDMA-assisted psychotherapies in Australia as quickly as possible, and to keep them affordable, so that their cost is not a barrier to their accessibility."

MMA is a funding partner for Australia's first Medicine-Assisted Therapy clinical trial at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne. The study has seen participating palliative care patients experiencing end-of-life anxiety and depression being given psilocybin, a naturally occurring compound derived from what is colloquially known as magic mushrooms, in conjunction with psychotherapy in a clinically controlled environment. This landmark research has set an important precedent for the mental health sector in Australia, enabling more clinical trials of Medicine-Assisted Therapy to follow at major Australian institutions soon.

Australia's inaugural International Summit on Psychedelic Therapies for Mental Illness will be hosted by MMA from 19–20 November at Sofitel Melbourne on Collins, bringing together healthcare professionals, scientists, academics, philanthropists, lawmakers, policy leaders, businesspeople,

investors and consumers. The two-day event will feature a wide-ranging program with a mix of international and local keynotes, workshops, hot spots, panel conversations, and a gala dinner with Q & A. The speakers' line-up will feature 14 international researchers and thought leaders, alongside Mind Medicine Australia Ambassadors. Early bird tickets are on sale now at [summit.mindmedicineaustralia.org](http://summit.mindmedicineaustralia.org)

The first-ever Medicine-Assisted Therapist Training Program in Australia will begin with a workshop in Melbourne between 16–17 November. The course will be conducted by leading practitioners from the US and UK for qualified healthcare professionals who are eager to gain a detailed understanding of this ground-breaking treatment for mental illnesses. The full training program will commence in 2021, and graduates will be well-positioned to meet the demand for Medicine-Assisted Therapy in the likelihood that it becomes available in Australia in the coming years. For more information, visit [mindmedicineaustralia.org/psychedelic-therapist-training-program/](http://mindmedicineaustralia.org/psychedelic-therapist-training-program/)

MMA is thrilled to be developing partnerships with Imperial College London and John Hopkins University in the US to develop an Asia-Pacific Centre of Psychedelic Medicine in Australia. While planning for the centre has only just begun, MMA can reveal it will be the first of its kind in this country and is envisioned to be a world-class institution for the region. More information will come later in 2020.

The development of Medicine-Assisted Therapies utilising Psilocybin and MDMA in Australia follows international research that has been so successful that the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted them Breakthrough Therapy Status. The FDA has created Expanded Access Schemes to allow people in need to undertake these therapies ahead of the conclusion of clinical trials and is expected to give full regulatory approval for these treatments in the US soon.

Visit [mindmedicineaustralia.org](http://mindmedicineaustralia.org) for more information about our quest to introduce Medicine-Assisted Therapy to Australia.

For all media enquiries, including interviews and images, please contact:

Brad Grimshaw, Communications Consultant

E: [brad@mindmedicineaustralia.org](mailto:brad@mindmedicineaustralia.org) M: 0476 230 970

Tania de Jong AM, Executive Director

E: [tania@mindmedicineaustralia.org](mailto:tania@mindmedicineaustralia.org) M: 0411 459 999

## **Contacts**

Brad Grimshaw

+61 476230970

[mailto: brad@mindmedicineaustralia.org](mailto:brad@mindmedicineaustralia.org)