

17<sup>th</sup> October 2019

To Whom It May Concern: Letter of Support

CatholicCare Sandhurst Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS) program works with young people between the ages of 0-18 who are showing signs of or who may be at risk of developing mental illness. Most participants come from socially, geographically and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The program aims to improve well-being to be able to better participate in their communities and to reach their full potential.

FMHSS has at times used brokerage to enable certain participants of the program to undertake Horses for Hope (HFH). However, given the nature of the program and the costs involved to deliver the program it does inhibit how many young people we are able to support through the HFH program.

To be able to access additional funding to either provide extra sessions for a particular participant or to enable more participants to access the program would be very much welcomed.

The team at CCS have built strong working/collaborative relationships with the HFH team for the benefit of the young people coming through the FMHSS program as described below.

The HFH program offers an alternate therapeutic type of connection and caring. The program uses a therapeutic approach that works to practically engage the participant's thinking, behavioural and emotional energy toward empathy, leadership, trust and protection in the service of caring for traumatised horses.

Tasks for participants may include learning how to build a trusting relationship with the horses that is transferable to building relationships with other people. Participants learn skills around regulating emotion, teamwork and patience thus having a greater understand of self and being able to find alternate ways for positively communicating with others. Additionally as a result, participants build self-confidence and trust through the realisation of their ability to trust in themselves and know they can rely on themselves as a safe and responsible leader and friend. These learnt/enhanced skills assist participants to express feelings in a safe and emotionally intelligent way.

This program also offers the opportunity for widening social networks and engaging with both animals and the HFH program staff. The responsibility, learning, building trusting and respectful relations with the horses and HFH staff provides participants with genuine experiences of healthy interdependent relationships. Additionally, the psychophysiological/emotional strategies and reflective practices engaged can be drawn on in challenging times to enhance participant wellbeing and decision making.

Yours Sincerely



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