

# Psychedelic substances could help with depression

## Old drugs a remedy for PTSD

PETE MARTINELLI

A THERAPEUTIC Goods Administration decision on psychedelic drugs in the New Year could offer hope to Far Northern sufferers of PTSD and depression.

The TGA is considering an application by charity Mind Medicine Australia to reschedule psilocybin and MDMA as schedule 8 drugs.

If approved, psychiatrists and physicians would be able to access the drugs to treat mental illness in a controlled setting. The TGA's interim decision is expected on February 3, 2021.

Mind Medicine is a registered charity that supports clinical based research and works towards evidence-based psychedelic-assisted

therapies. It counts former Minister Trade Andrew Robb and former Chief of Defence Chris Barrie among its board members.

The charity has begun enrolling health practitioners into its Certificate in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapies, including four practitioners from the Far North.

Counsellor Ella Shannon and provisional psychologist Adam Walker are Mind Medicine FNQ Chapter members and have both enrolled in the January intake.

Ms Shannon said the certificate course would assist practitioners in guiding their patients through psychedelic therapy in a controlled, safe environment.

"When the law is changed, we will be well positioned



Provisional psychologist Adam Walker and counsellor Ella Shannon.

with people ready to be involved," Ms Shannon said.

"It is pretty exciting times."

Mind Medicine Australia co-founder Tania de Jong said the charity aimed to have the medicines available nationwide.

"It was that people in regional areas cannot have access to them," Ms de Jong said. "There are cannabis clinics that are interested in exploring these psychedelics

with suitable protocols." The certificate's January intake is already full with a second, in July, rapidly filling.

While Mind Medicine's work is ahead of the curve in Australia, overseas trials have already shown the effectiveness of psychedelics in treating PTSD.

In the US, while many cities have decriminalised psychedelic mushrooms, Oregon was the first state to

legalise the medicine in a therapeutic setting.

"Veterans and emergency responders are one of the biggest cohorts affected by mental health. They have the highest rates of PTSD and depression," Ms de Jong said.

"One in seven of us will experience mental illness in our lifetime and that has been exacerbated by COVID. If it is not affecting us, it is affecting someone we know."

## Schools of hard knocks

ANTONIA O'FLAHERTY

EXHAUSTED, stressed and assaulted Queensland teachers are taking leave from classrooms at alarming rates with a 30 per cent jump in psychological WorkCover claims over 10 years, a figure that is under-reported according to the teachers' union.

During the 2010-11 financial year, the Education Department accepted 102 psychological WorkCover claims, which jumped by 30 per cent by 2019-20 to 133 accepted claims.

However, about half the lodged applications were rejected in both time periods, which Kevin Bates, from the Queensland Teachers' Union, said demonstrated the reason teachers were less likely to report psychological claims.

Physical claims have also jumped, from 1414 in 2010-11 to 1495 in 2019-20 (up about 6 per cent). The costs paid for WorkCover claims were \$21.4m in 2019-20.

Mr Bates said workload pressure and occupational violence were among the reasons teachers were claiming physical and psychological injury. A department spokesman said the department was committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of employees, students and all in schools.

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