

## Spotlight on schizophrenia

THE Mental Health Association of Central Australia (MHACA) will be hosting a public talk as part of Schizophrenia Awareness Week, featuring prize-winning author and poet Sandy Jeffs.

Miss Jeffs will share her inspiring story and journey of what it's like to live with a mental illness and the power of creativity in recovery.

MHACA general manager Paul Tomaszewski said the week was to raise awareness and focus on how the community could help support and care for people living with schizophrenia.

"Schizophrenia can often involve trauma that can impact on whole families.

"The role of community organisations can be vital in helping to provide social support," he said.

The public talk will be held on Tuesday, May 20, at the Andy McNeil Room from 9:30am-10:30am.

## Tribunal eases appeal process

THE Government has introduced the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, a one-stop-shop for civil and administrative appeals, in a bid to cut red tape.

NTCAT will create a user-friendly appeals process and replace the majority of the 35 commissioners, tribunals, committees and boards which currently exist.

Attorney-General John Elferink said it was about creating efficiencies for Territorians by providing a single, central, easy to use system.

"The tribunal will hear and determine a broad range of administrative matters and operate independently of the government," he said.

"The tribunal will remove unnecessary duplication and inefficiencies, a similar move which has already been adopted in all states across the country, except Tasmania."



Central Australian Mental Health Service clinical psychologist Marcus Tabart speaks with long-time schizophrenia sufferer Leo Welin

Picture: JUSTIN BRIERTY

# Push to remove stigma

**Sasha Petrova**  
HEALTH REPORTER

BORN in Finland and raised in Tennant Creek, poet Leo Welin has a unique history.

But his writing explores and reveals something else entirely; a perception of the world that most people aren't privy to. Or perhaps they may be, but not to the same extent.

Because since the 1970s, Mr Welin has been suffering from the often debilitating condition of schizophrenia.

"When I first had a break-

down, my reality changed visually," Mr Welin says.

"I didn't feel like a part of anything around me. It's like everything was flat. But I'm not as afraid of it as I used to be."

Mental Health Association of Central Australia clinical psychologist Marcus Tabart described schizophrenia as a "disease where you jump to the wrong conclusions".

Dr Tabart said the condition was complex and was mostly associated with people hearing voices, but "not everyone with schizophrenia hears

voices and not everyone who does, hears them all the time".

Mr Welin joins more than 150,000 Australians affected by schizophrenia.

Misconceptions about the illness need to be sorted out so there is more support in the community – this is the aim of Schizophrenia Awareness Week that runs from May 18 until May 24.

"A person is not an illness," Dr Tabart said, "rather they are affected by an illness."

Studies have shown extreme mental illness to

always be linked with intelligence and creativity.

Mr Welin said: "I've known a lot of people with schizophrenia over the years. These people have been very intelligent and have blown my mind with their talents in writing, poetry, art and music."

He said for him, poetry had restorative qualities.

"There is purpose in poetry, an opportunity to grow and develop," he said.

"Poetry is a way of expressing yourself. You are painting a picture with words."

Another motivation for the awareness week is to prioritise mental health in research because with the right medication (and social support) many sufferers can live a good quality of life.

Dr Tabart said schizophrenia drugs were at only a second generation of development, in contrast to a fourth generation of hypertension medications.

"Why isn't there more research?" he said.

For information on schizophrenia, visit [sane.org.au](http://sane.org.au).



Northern Territory Government

NORTHERN TERRITORY  
pensioner & carer  
concession scheme

Changes to membership eligibility

Commencing 14 May, 2014

All new applicants to the NT Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme will need to provide evidence that they hold a valid Commonwealth Department of Human Services or Veteran Affairs concession card to be eligible for NT Government concessions. Exclusions apply to certain categories of Commonwealth concessions.

There will be no changes for existing members of the scheme.

The changes to the scheme will ensure the future sustainability of one of Australia's most generous pensioner and carer concession schemes to help those who need it most.

For more information, call 1800 777 704 (cost of a local call) or visit [www.nt.gov.au/health](http://www.nt.gov.au/health)

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Northern Territory Government

## National Walk Safely to School Day

Friday 23 May 2014

Help your child to be a safe pedestrian by:

- ensuring they take the safest route to school;
- only walking on the footpath; and
- always using a school or pedestrian crossing to cross a road.

For more information contact Road Safety on 1800 720 144.

[www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au](http://www.roadsafety.nt.gov.au)

