

# Information Booklet



## FINDERS/KEEPERS SUPPORT GROUP

## BURIED IN TREASURES SUPPORT GROUP

## GOLDEN SHOVEL SUPPORT GROUP

## HELPING HANDS IN HOME SUPPORT SERVICES

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## Who we are?

Macarthur Hoarding Disorder Resource Network (MHDRN) is a peer led support group living with and or have experienced Hoarding Disorder and or Severe Domestic Squalor

### **MHDRN exists to promote networking, provide support and information and help to prevent isolation by:**

- ✓ Providing a safe and confidential meeting space
- ✓ Meeting regularly
- ✓ Working together to find strategies to educate the community about H & S to decrease misunderstanding, stigma and discrimination for people that have these mental health conditions
- ✓ Working together to encourage and manage issues with clutter and hoarding behaviour.
- ✓ Sharing experiences so that others in the group know they are not alone
- ✓ Supporting each other when a trigger or crisis arise
- ✓ Advocating for group members
- ✓ Establishing a strong peer support network in the Macarthur region

## We Provide:

- **BURIED IN TREASURES SUPPORT GROUP:** 15 week program for people to learn the skills and strategies to declutter
- **GOLDEN SHOVEL SUPPORT GROUP :** For those who have completed the 15 week program to extend their learning and provide ongoing support
- **HELPING HANDS IN HOME SUPPORT SERVICES:** Available to members of the Golden Shovel Support Group
- **FINDERS / KEEPERS SUPPORT GROUP:** For anyone who would like to learn more about Hoarding Disorder and or Severe Domestic Squalor. All welcome!



## Our Mission Statement:

*To create a strong connection for people living in an excessively cluttered environment, to meet and receive support, and to show that there is help available. Macarthur Hoarding Disorder Resource Network (MHDRN) aims to empower group members by respecting their privacy and confidentiality, providing non-judgmental and non-discriminatory support that encourages people to do the work of decluttering.*

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## Our Vision:

*To support and empower people living with Hoarding & Squalor to understand and gain new insights through education and sharing positive strategies to reduce clutter, gain functionality of living spaces, and improve each individual's quality of life.*

## About Hoarding Disorder (HD):

- HD is a severe and complex mental health disorder which has the potential to affect a person's health, finances, employment, and tenancy. It may also result in the removal of pets and in extreme cases, children living in the home
- It makes it impossible to use the rooms in their home for their intended purposes, such as sleep in their bed, cook in the kitchen, and use the bathroom
- The causes of HD are varied but often include family dynamics, grief, loss, trauma, abuse, poverty and homelessness
- An uncoordinated approach and hasty cleanup can often retraumatise the individual and hinder further recovery leaving them disempowered
- People with HD may feel shame and guilt, and struggle to understand why they can't stop the behaviour
- Community stigma and misunderstanding around this disorder also intensifies the problem, which contributes to the person's reluctance to seek help

*Organisations and front line workers often believe a 'clean-up' is the first step in intervention. This ignores the other aspects of the disorder such as the behavioural, psychological and emotional barriers. Without a coordinated approach to manage all these areas, progress and recovery for the person will be minimal. The person with HD may even revert to their old behaviours, or worse, within 1-2 weeks after the clean-up is completed.*

## Do you live with a Hoarding Disorder?

- Are you fearful about throwing things away?
- Do you have very strong, often distorted beliefs about the value of your items and their usefulness?
- Do you have strong emotional attachments to your possessions?
- Do you experience high levels of anxiety if you have to decide or someone asks you to get rid of anything?
- Are you a perfectionist and have a fear about making mistakes, particularly when sorting or discarding items?
- Do you have a belief that you are being wasteful if you discard anything?
- Do you underestimate your memory so are reluctant to store things out of sight?
- Do you have strong beliefs about control, which often results in a reluctance to discard, receive support and or acknowledge that you have a problem with hoarding?
- Do you overthink and confuse yourself to the point of inaction?
- Do you lack the ability to organise your possessions in a way that decreases your clutter?
- Do you make excuses to avoid dealing with your hoarding because you are so overwhelmed by the amount of clutter you have?
- Do you have a problem with acquiring too many items that have very little or no value?
- Are you able to use the rooms in your home for their intended purpose, i.e. sleep in your bed, use your bathroom, cook in your kitchen?

## Is this You?

If you are living with a hoarding and or squalor (H&S) issue, you are not alone. In fact, you may be among the **600,000** plus Australians that are estimated to be living in a hoarding and or squalor environment. If you are, recovery is possible but you will need long term intervention that provides acknowledgment, support and acceptance of the problem.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM-5) recognises H&S as a mental health disorder and is now known as either Hoarding Disorder (HD) or Severe Domestic Squalor (SDS). For people experiencing HD or SDS, they will exhibit very strong psychological, behavioural and emotional attachments to possessions which results in an extremely cluttered environment.

You also may be at risk of a range of other issues including health problems, homelessness, isolation, family breakdown and if you live in public housing or a private rental, you may be at risk of losing your tenancy. Hoarding Disorder presents across the lifespan and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. It doesn't discriminate and doesn't just affect older people. Anyone can live in a cluttered environment.

**If this is you, recovery is possible, but the first step starts with you**





## Self-Assessment for You:

Try this simple assessment to find out if you may be at risk of hoarding behaviours:

### Hoarding rating scale (HRS-I)<sup>1</sup>

Circle the number that corresponds most closely to your experience **DURING THE PAST WEEK**. Please use the following scale when answering items below:

0	No problem
2	Mild problem, occasionally (less than weekly) acquires items not needed, or acquires a few unneeded items
4	Moderate, regularly (once or twice weekly) acquires items not needed, or acquires some unneeded items
6	Severe, frequently (several times per week) acquires items not needed, or acquires many unneeded items
8	Extreme, very often (daily) acquires items not needed, or acquires large numbers of unneeded items

#### 1. Because of the clutter or number of possessions, how difficult is it for you to use the rooms in your home?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely difficult

#### 2. To what extent do you have difficulty discarding (or recycling, selling, giving away) ordinary things that other people would get rid of?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely difficult

#### 3. To what extent do you currently have a problem with collecting free things or buying more things than you need or can use or can afford?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely difficult

## Self-Assessment for You: (continued)

**4. To what extent do you experience emotional distress because of clutter, difficulty discarding or problems with buying or acquiring things?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely difficult

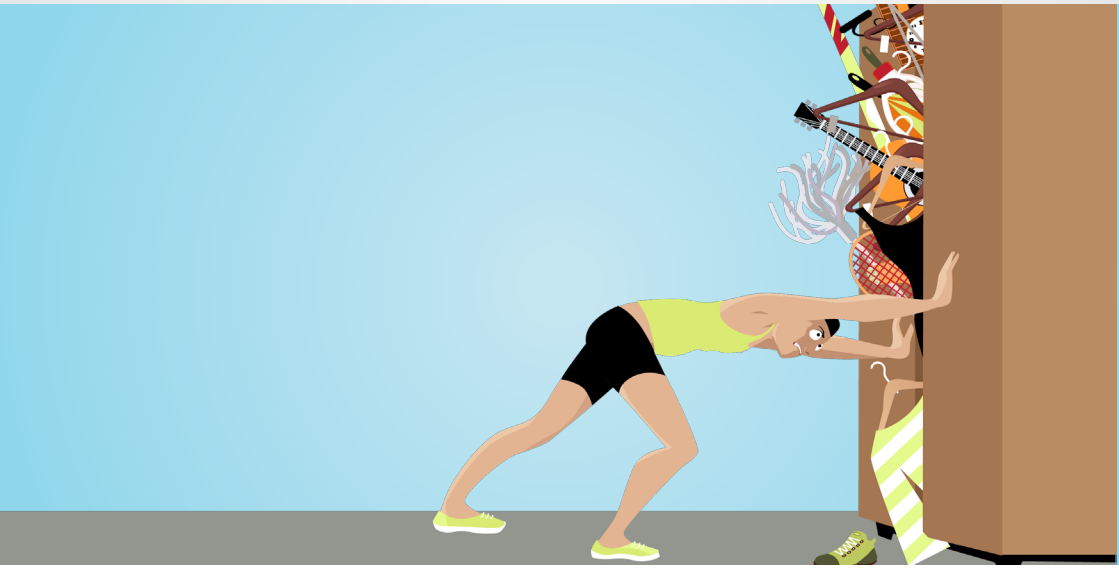
**5. To what extent do you experience impairment in your life (daily routine, job/school, social activities, family activities, financial difficulties) because of clutter, difficulty discarding, or problems with buying or acquiring things?**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all difficult		Mild		Moderate		Severe		Extremely difficult

**Hoarding is considered to be a significant issue:**

- If your response is either a 4 or greater to any 1 question.
- If your score on questions one, two or three was 4 or higher, this may suggest that symptoms of hoarding could be significant for you.
- If your score on questions four or five was 4 or higher, this means that hoarding is having a real impact on your quality of life.

1 Source: Tolin DF, Frost RO, Steketee G, Gray KD, Fitch KE 2008, The economic and social burden of compulsive hoarding, Psychiatry Research 160, 200–211.



## Help is available.

MDS offers support for consumers through the Buried in Treasures (BIT) Support Group. It's a 15 week program for people struggling to declutter. The program helps people to understand why they hoard and why they are unable to get it under control. The group gives participants the tools and strategies to assist in sorting and discarding, while meeting others with similar struggles. The other groups within the MHDRN are also available including The Golden Shovel Support Group, Helping HandS in Home Support Services and the Finders/Keepers Support Group.

**If you would like further information about the hoarding program or available supports, please call **MDS** on (02) 4621 8400 or via email: [information@mdservices.com.au](mailto:information@mdservices.com.au)**

# Contact Us

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