



Mental Health
Australia

THE IMPACT OF ACCESS TO HOUSING ON OUR MENTAL HEALTH



At Mental Health Australia we know that appropriate and affordable housing is an absolute foundation for mental health recovery and wellbeing.

Access to appropriate and affordable housing is the key for people to participate in our society, contribute economically, recover from illness, and maintain their mental health.

Many people with lived experience of mental ill-health do not have access to adequate housing. At least 31,000 people across Australia living with mental ill-health are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, and have an unmet need for long-term housing.

Many more people with experience of mental illness are living in unsuitable accommodation, and over 2,000 people are stuck in institutional care because other accommodation is not available.

Responsibility for service provision and integration at the interface of mental health and housing must be included in future reform, including the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement and next National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

Access to, and affordable housing is an issue for many portfolios and all jurisdictions.

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THE FACTS

How does access to housing impact our mental health?

As highlighted and outlined in the [Trajectories](#) Research Report presented by our member Mind Australia and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), many people with lived experience of mental ill-health do not have access to safe, secure, appropriate and/or affordable housing.

To advocate to government on this key fact, Mental Health Australia partnered with Mind and AHURI to develop [policy priorities](#) for reform based on this research, through consultation with people with lived experience and other key experts.

The aim of this work is to ensure a succinct, agreed position statement on housing and mental health will be used to drive reform, to ensure every person with lived experience of mental ill-health has access to appropriate housing.

The Trajectories Research found that experience of poor mental health directly impacts housing stability, where people with lived experience of mental ill-health often face discrimination in the private rental market, a lack of affordable housing, insecure tenure and difficulty accessing supports.

Housing insecurity, as well as anxiety and stress in relation to housing affordability, is also associated with poor mental health and increased suicide risk.

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WHAT CAN THE GOVERNMENT DO?

Mental Health Australia and many others in the sector are calling on all governments to take actions to improve access to appropriate and affordable housing for people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

1. Increase availability of housing options - Australia urgently requires increased housing options and supply to meet the diverse needs of people with lived experience of mental ill-health. Governments should invest effectively to address the spectrum of need by:

- Developing more public, community and affordable housing either through direct capital investment or by addressing the gap between what it costs to build and manage social housing and what tenants can pay.
- Closing the gap in the availability of housing with integrated mental health support, by expanding existing models that have shown to be effective.
- Better utilising the private rental market to provide diverse housing options to suit a range of different needs, for example by expanding the use of programs that head lease properties from the private rental market.
- Expanding the use of Housing First models for people experiencing persistent homelessness.

2. Support to sustain tenancies - Tenant support programs are effective and efficient, but do not currently meet the needs of people experiencing mental ill-health, and are largely unavailable for private tenants.

- Develop tailored tenant support programs that recognise the variable capacity and care needs of people experiencing both episodic and enduring mental ill-health.
- Develop and deliver training and resources to grow the capacity of housing workers to sustain the tenancies of people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

3. Early intervention and prevention - The mental health and housing systems must be better integrated and have the capacity to respond quickly when a person becomes unwell or first experiences housing insecurity.

- Implement mechanisms and provide resourcing to facilitate better coordination between parts of the clinical and community mental health systems and the housing and homelessness systems.
- Improve transitions out of institutional care ('no exits into homelessness').
- Implement population-based screening to identify and support those at risk.
- Ensure that people have rapid access to clinical and community based mental health services when and where they need it.

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LOOKING FOR MORE DETAIL OR RESOURCES?

April 2021 - Mental Health Australia Position Statement - Housing and mental health

[Mental Health Australia Position Statement - Housing and mental health](#) | [Mental Health Australia \(mhaustralia.org\)](#)

February 2020 - Mental health and housing - AHURI

<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/analysis/policy-analysis/mental-health-and-housing>

February 2020 - Trajectories the interplay between housing and mental health pathways

[Trajectories the interplay between housing and mental health pathways](#) | [AHURI](#)

Victorian Government - Housing and accommodation support for people with mental illness

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/housing-and-accommodation-support-for-people-with-a-mental-illness>

2017 - National Mental Health Commission - Housing, Homelessness and Mental Health

The safety, stability and security that comes from having a home is a fundamental part of leading a contributing life. The intersection between homelessness and mental illness is a key concern for the Commission.

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/social-determinants/housing-homesless-and-mental-health>

Mental Health Australia would like to thank its member organisations and key stakeholders for contributing to this extensive body of work on how access to and affordable housing impacts the mental health of all Australians. If you are a member of Mental Health Australia and would like to add to these resources, please contact info@mhaustralia.org

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