



**Mental Health
Australia**
Media release

The cost-of-living crisis is dramatically impacting Australians' mental health new national research reveals

12 September 2023 | EMBARGOED

The rising cost of living is directly damaging the mental wellbeing of Australians the 2023 Report to the Nation, an independent annual benchmark survey produced for Mental Health Australia, has found.

More than one in two Australians say the rising cost of living is having a major impact on their mental health, and one in five say cost is a barrier to accessing mental health support, the report, conducted by Ipsos, states.

The findings underline the need for urgent action by the Federal Government to improve access to mental health services, address inequalities, boost early intervention and implement strategies to expand the mental health workforce, said Mental Health Australia Chair, Matt Berriman.

Mr Berriman will launch the report at Parliament House on 13 September, before 80 delegates representing 55 mental health organisations from across Australia as part of Mental Health Australia's annual Parliamentary Advocacy Day.

The representatives of all of Australia's major mental health organisations will call on the government to make urgent reforms to the mental health system.

"As the national and independent peak for the mental health sector, we are hosting this vital conversation with the CEOs and senior leadership of our member organisations at Parliament House on the urgent need for mental health reform for all Australians," says Mr Berriman.

"The 2023 *Report to the Nation* demonstrates that we must all work together and with government to address the increasing need for mental health services and the barriers to accessing them."

Mental Health Australia CEO, Carolyn Nikoloski, said that the Report's findings confirm the need to improve access to mental health supports and address inequalities.

"We commend the government's commitment to improving equity in access to mental health services following the findings of the Better Access review, but we need to move quickly and effectively," says Ms Nikoloski.



Mental Health Australia is calling on the government to:

- increase access to early intervention through low-intensity and digital mental health supports
- fund psychosocial services outside the NDIS to fill an urgent service gap, and design alternative supports options for people with complex needs
- release and fund implementation of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy and a long-term mental health reform roadmap.

“Many of the key recommendations from the 2020 Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health have still not been implemented. The government needs to be setting clear roles and responsibilities for mental health across the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and the sector, as well as improve regional planning and commissioning of services and implementing strong accountability mechanisms,” says Ms Nikoloski.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP will deliver the keynote address at Parliamentary Advocacy Day, with speeches from the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon Emma McBride MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Melissa McIntosh MP, and Greens health spokesperson, Senator Jordan Steele-John.

Ms Nikoloski says the Advocacy Day provides a “special opportunity for our members to advocate for ongoing reform and communicate to our elected officials about how imperative it is to fund a long-term mental health reform roadmap, so collectively we can change the trajectory of Australia’s mental health”.

Mr Berriman says the *Report to the Nation* presents a concrete opportunity to inform mental health policy and drive changes we need and deserve as a community. It also shines a light on the alarming need to improve our mental health.

Following a unanimous decision by the Mental Health Australia Board to extend his tenure through to the end of 2025, Mr Berriman says he is excited about his next term as Chair, but has been frustrated at the slow pace of change in mental health reform. Mr Berriman is adamant that during his next term, which will continue through the next federal election, there must be the real reform that Australia needs.

“I’m as passionate about this role as ever, proud to work with our member organisations at Parliament House and speak directly with MPs and Senators on the importance of systemic mental health reform,” Mr Berriman says.

“During my next term as Chair, I want to make sure that we’re not just talking though – I want to focus on outcomes and accountability. That has been missing from the system for far too long.

“At Mental Health Australia, our vision is for mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities. As Chair, working with our Board and CEO, I am looking forward to leading the sector with a united voice to government to achieve this. It is change we need now and there is no time to waste.”

ENDS

**Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski is available for interviews.
Quotes from Ms Nikoloski and Mr Berriman are attributable.
Media Contact: Nikki Hogan – 0402 528 022**

