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We must stamp out stigma and discrimination if we are to improve our mental health

As polling day for the 2022 Federal Election draws near, Mental Health Australia is reminding the major parties, and all candidates, of the importance to address all forms of stigma and discrimination when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of all Australians.

Mental Health Australia's CEO Dr Leanne Beagley says that policies and politics that have the potential to discriminate and create further stigmatising practices, also have the potential to impact the mental health of many Australians.

"At our core, Mental Health Australia's vision is for mentally healthy people, mentally healthy communities, and for the mental health of all Australians to be improved we must eliminate stigma and discrimination, and promote social inclusion for the entire population," said Dr Beagley.

"Privileging the rights of any group of the population over another has the potential to cause broader harm by embedding stigmatising attitudes in the nation's discourse that may cause harm to the whole population."

"We know that people with mental ill-health who belong to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+ and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia can be exposed to multiple forms of stigma and discrimination and this can have a significant impact on their mental health."

"Unfortunately, stigma and discrimination regarding mental ill-health also remains prevalent in Australia. This means people experience stigma related both to mental ill-health and other aspects of their lives."

"After decades of work from many organisations raising awareness around mental illness, encouraging people to talk and reducing stigma, the pandemic has highlighted and influenced many more discussions about mental health and wellbeing. However, Mental Health Australia says there is still a long way to go when talking about complex mental illness, stigma and broader discriminatory practices."

"Now that mental health and wellbeing has an increased focus in our communities, we have to continue those significant conversations and address the broader issues around stigma and how it can also lead to discrimination."

"These issues are important, and when people vote with mental health in mind they should do so knowing where the major parties, and all candidates stand on stigma and discrimination."

What does it mean to vote with mental health in mind?

It means to vote knowing that every issue, every announcement, every debate, every election promise made, has the potential to impact our mental health, and our mental health system.

To see how these issues and more can impact our mental health go to <https://mhaustralia.org/2022-election-vote-mental-health-mind>

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