



**Mental Health
Australia**
Media release

Steps forward for digital mental health

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Mental Health Australia welcomes the certainty in funding for digital and crisis mental health supports announced this week.

“The Australian community will benefit from ongoing access to digital mental health services and supports, as these resources provide a crucial means for individuals to address and manage mental health issues,” Mental Health Australia CEO, Carolyn Nikoloski says.

The Albanese Government has announced an investment of \$456.7 million over five years to continue funding for national crisis and support services, including Lifeline and its 13YARN service for First Nations Australians, Beyond Blue and Kids Helpline.

Mental Health Australia also welcomes the announcement of a sector-led consortium to develop a new national approach to help people navigate digital services.

“It is a step in the right direction to leverage existing supports and services that people in Australia already trust. This announcement also shows that the government values and trusts the work of the mental health sector.”

In addition, the investment to strengthen the headspace model is a good step forward, given the crisis in youth mental health— but more options are needed for people with complex needs.

With the announcement of these initial measures, Mental Health Australia calls on the government to also address the wider gap in mental health supports by utilising existing infrastructure to deliver multidisciplinary, wrap-around supports that responds to community needs.

“The gap in mental health supports is reaching unprecedented levels across Australia, and without wider reforms existing challenges will continue to worsen,” Ms Nikoloski says.



Mental Health Australia's recent Mapping Mental Health Care research project highlights the disparity in access to government funded mental health services across the country, showing that many areas experiencing higher mental health needs have lower access to mental health supports.

The mental health sector welcomed action in some areas of reform earlier this year, with progress on establishing national lived experience peak bodies and the release of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.

The Federal Budget announcements in May this year included the provision of funding for future mental health priorities in response to the Better Access evaluation.

"The evaluation found that while Better Access supports positive outcomes for people experiencing mental health challenges, it is serving some groups better than others, and these gaps are widening," Ms Nikoloski says.

The evaluation also found that Better Access does not always serve people with complex needs optimally, and recommended Better Access should be supplemented by other multidisciplinary models that provide more intensive, holistic support for people with more complex needs.

"We commend the Hon Mark Butler MP on establishing the Mental Health Reform Advisory Committee, which is shaping and supporting the government's response to the Better Access evaluation and broader mental health reforms," Ms Nikoloski says.

"There is still an urgent need to develop a national mental health reform roadmap which is co-designed with people with lived experience, their family and carers, and the sector, to ensure integration and implementation of these key reforms."

Mental Health Australia Chair, Matt Berriman, says the mental health crisis isn't a problem that can be solved overnight, and the government must work closely with the sector to establish long-term reform.

"This is a whole of government issue. That means every member, no matter what party, Senate or House of Representatives, needs to contribute to mental health reform," Mr Berriman says.

"We know we have bi-partisan support on this issue, and looking ahead to the Federal Budget in May and the 2025 Federal Election beyond, government must prioritise funding to deliver mental health reform to rectify the grave disparities in access to mental health care."

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