



Mental Health
Australia
Media release

Governments take action on mental health sector priorities

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Mental Health Australia commends health and mental health ministers for listening to the mental health sector and agreeing to take immediate action on recommended priorities at the ministers' meeting today.

As outlined in a joint Statement of Priorities released on Monday 12 August, Mental Health Australia and 80 mental health organisations from across the country called for Australian, state and territory governments to come together to address the gap in mental health supports between primary care and acute and emergency services.

Mental Health Australia is pleased to see that several key priorities have been agreed to by all levels of government at today's meeting, providing an important path forward for governments and the sector alike to continue working together.

The commitment of Ministers to meet twice a year to continue to progress reform priorities is a strong start, with the inclusion of sector participation (including those with lived and living experience) in the next meeting particularly welcome. It has also been agreed that the next meeting will focus on child and youth mental health and consider reform to address unmet needs.

Delivering on a further key recommendation of our Statement of Priorities, the national Analysis of Unmet Need for Psychosocial Support outside the NDIS has been publicly released after today's meeting. The next step following release of the Analysis must now be a clear commitment by the Australian and State and Territory governments to co-fund services to fully address the identified unmet need. The agreement of Ministers to work with the mental health sector in developing a robust plan for future psychosocial support arrangements is a positive step.

Governments' acknowledgment of mental health workforce challenges is welcome, as is their commitment to work collectively in responding. It will be important for the new national workforce data and information monitoring project to include the community-managed and peer mental health workforces, who have previously been overlooked in national data collections. Full funding of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy is needed, with urgent action to increase access to training.

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“Today’s meeting was an opportunity for all Health and Mental Health Ministers around the country to come together and commit to addressing gaps in our mental health system. It’s heartening to see that they have listened to us – to the voices of lived and living experience, sector leaders and service providers – and taken up our offer of partnership in reform,” said Carolyn Nikoloski, CEO of Mental Health Australia.

“There is still a lot of work to do together, but today’s meeting delivered some critical tools which will help us better collaborate.”

Improving access to mental health supports is a joint responsibility across all governments in Australia, and today’s meeting shows governments are willing to work together to achieve change. We will continue to work in partnership with governments, while being guided by our member organisations and people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health and their family, carers and supporters, to ensure a national approach to co-funding solutions is front and centre in intergovernmental negotiations, and in the lead-up to the federal election.

ENDS

The Statement of Priorities for Health and Mental Health Ministers Meeting can be read here:

<https://mhaustralia.org/our-work/statement-priorities-health-and-mental-health-ministers-meeting>

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