



Mental Health  
Australia  
Media release

# National Mental Health Report Card highlights need for urgent action

4 July 2024 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mental Health Australia is deeply concerned that the national rates of mental ill-health are not improving, with some cohorts even experiencing worsening mental health, as highlighted in today's 2023 National Mental Health Report Card from the National Mental Health Commission. It is clear from this data that significantly more investment and reform is needed to build the mental health system the Australian community needs and deserves.

As the Prime Minister stated earlier this year, "We can always do better when it comes to mental health". Today's report card serves as a sobering reminder of just how far we have to go.

"These levels of mental ill-health and distress highlight the urgent need for stronger mental health reform, including bold investments in prevention and addressing social determinants of mental ill-health," says Mental Health Australia Acting CEO Michelle Possingham.

Between 2007 and the 2020-2022 period, an estimated 1.1 million more people in Australia reported experiencing a mental disorder.

"The report card paints an alarming picture of mental ill-health among young people, particularly young women. The government must work in partnership with the sector and people with lived experience to radically improve access to mental health supports and invest properly in prevention to turn this trend around," Ms Possingham says.

The proportion of young people aged 16-24 years with a mental disorder in the last 12 months increased from 26 per cent in 2007 to 39 per cent in 2020-2022. For young women, this increase was even larger: from 29 per cent in 2007 to 46 per cent in 2020-2022.

"Unfortunately, this level of need far surpasses what the recent Federal Budget allocations provide. Whilst we were pleased to see some exciting new investments, such as in the National Low Intensity Digital Mental Health Service, the scale of overall investment fell well short of what we know is needed to make a meaningful difference to these outcomes."

"In the lead up to the Federal Election we need a real commitment from all sides of Parliament to address this gap in future Budgets, with funding security for the sector to deliver the transformational change that is needed," Ms Possingham says.



Concerningly, available data suggests the mental health system's ability to provide effective care is not improving. There are significant shortages of all professions in the mental health workforce and a substantial proportion of people delaying accessing mental health care due to cost (19 per cent in 2022-23, up from 12 per cent in 2020-21).

Ultimately, more robust and comprehensive data, including across non-government mental health services, is needed to provide a complete picture.

"Governments must work with the mental health sector to address these data gaps to ensure we can truly understand what is happening across the mental health system and why," Ms Possingham says.

"Mental Health Australia will continue to strongly advocate for greater investment in robust data and monitoring systems, alongside the push for a reinvigorated and independent National Mental Health Commission, which remains a key element of a strong mental health system for the whole community."

**ENDS**

**Media Contact: Senior Communications Manager Lisa Clarke 0421 072 046**

