

Mental Health Australia Strategy 2024 - 2029



mhaustralia.org

From the Board

Mental Health Australia has a rich history of advocating for mental health reform. However, more work needs to be done to make the policy, system and cultural changes that will fundamentally improve the mental health of Australia.

As the leading peak body in the mental health sector, our next five years are focussed on collaborating with our members, the Australian Government, and people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, and their family, carers and supporters, to reform the mental health system. We need a cohesive mental health system, that both prevents mental health conditions whenever possible, and seamlessly integrates services, ensuring people in Australia receive the support they require at the level they need, irrespective of their postcode or income. That is why we are committed to building a strong foundation for this work and leading a unified approach to mental health reform, so collectively we can improve the mental health outcomes and experiences of all people in Australia.

We want a country where everyone can thrive and have good mental health and wellbeing throughout their lives. This means ensuring the system not only supports people experiencing mental health challenges or psychological distress, but also assists family, carers and supporters who provide emotional, practical and financial assistance to family members or friends with mental ill-health due to gaps in available services.

We recognise the diversity and breadth of needs and experiences – both within the community and amongst service providers and clinicians – and work inclusively so no one is left behind. We are committed to advocating for system reform at a national level so all people in Australia can get the supports they need before problems snowball, and have good and safe experiences of care – whether that's one-off support, or over a lifetime.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, our plan builds on our previous advocacy and reignites efforts over the next five years, outlining how we will collaboratively work towards reform and a human rights-based model of care. The human



Mark Orr AM
Mental Health Australia Interim Chair

Carolyn Nikoloski
Mental Health Australia CEO

rights and dignity of all people with mental health conditions will be championed as we take these next steps.

We are enthusiastic about this transformative journey that lies ahead. Our new strategic plan has been developed in consultation with our member organisations, the Australian Government, and importantly, people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters. Our strategy reflects our commitment to a proactive, preventive, responsive and human rights-based mental health system.

Amid the evolving mental health landscape, we acknowledge the heightened expectations for reform, while still recognising the progress that has been made with initiatives like the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement. However, decision makers must be held to account, and we remain focussed on finding solutions for the challenges with our current system.

Over the next five years, the overarching vision of Mental Health Australia remains resolute: mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities.

Acknowledgment of Country

Mental Health Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present. Mental Health Australia is committed to reconciliation through our work and our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Acknowledgement of Lived Experience

Mental Health Australia recognises the unique contribution of people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, in championing change in Australia's mental health system. These contributions enable us as a sector to make meaningful strides in improving the mental health of all people in Australia.



About Mental Health Australia

For over 25 years Mental Health Australia has advocated for mental health reform, and we continue to drive policy changes and proactively put mental health on the agenda.

We have over 140 members, including service providers, professional bodies, organisations representing people with mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, researchers and state and territory mental health peak bodies.

As the national peak for mental health, we unite the mental health sector to present a cohesive voice to government, and provide practical policy solutions to influence decision-making, which in turn, improves the mental health system and the mental health of people in Australia. We work to strengthen the impact and influence of the mental health sector, and embed a human rights approach across the mental health system.

The views and expertise of people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, along with our member organisations, underpins our work. We believe that by bringing together diverse perspectives across Mental Health Australia's members, the community and governments, we will create greater change and more innovative solutions, than what any of us could do working alone.

Why we're here

Many people in Australia are experiencing declining mental health, and they have the right to safe, appropriate and effective healthcare and supports. Unfortunately, our current system is inequitable, fragmented and not meeting the community's needs.

Mental health is the primary reason people consult general practitioners, with more than two in five people experiencing a mental health condition at some point in their lives. Young people are also experiencing a dramatic rise in mental health conditions, from 25 per cent in 2007 to 40 per cent in 2021.

This shows the urgent need for mental health reform.

There is a need for strengthened national leadership and accountability, as we are not investing enough in prevention early intervention, there is inequitable access to services across the country, the mental health workforce is under immense pressure, and there is a need for more holistic and rights-based responses to mental health.

This is why Mental Health Australia advocates for national system reform and leads the mental health sector to work together to improve mental health outcomes and experiences of care.

1 in 2

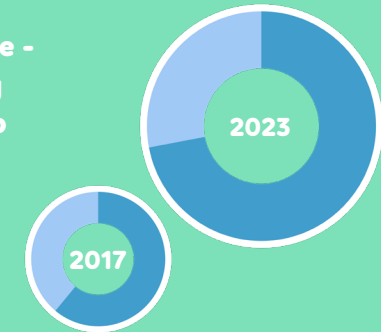
people experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives

National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2020 - 2022



Mental health is a growing issue - the proportion of GPs reporting psychological issues in their top 3 reasons for presentations increased from 61% in 2017 to 72% in 2023

General Practice Health of the Nation 2023



Young people are experiencing a dramatic rise in mental health conditions, from 25% in 2007 to 40% in 2021

National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2020 - 2022



Mental Health Australia Strategy 2024 - 2029

Our vision

Mentally healthy people,
mentally health communities.

Our role

We are the national, independent peak
body for the mental health sector.

We unite the voices of the mental
health sector and advocate for policies
that improve mental health.

Strategic Goal 1

We drive better mental health policies and systems

Mental Health Australia will:

- Set the agenda for national policy reform
- Develop and advocate for practical policy solutions
- Advocate for system reforms that improve mental health and enable the mental health sector to thrive

Strategic Goal 2

We unite and strengthen the mental health sector

Mental Health Australia will:

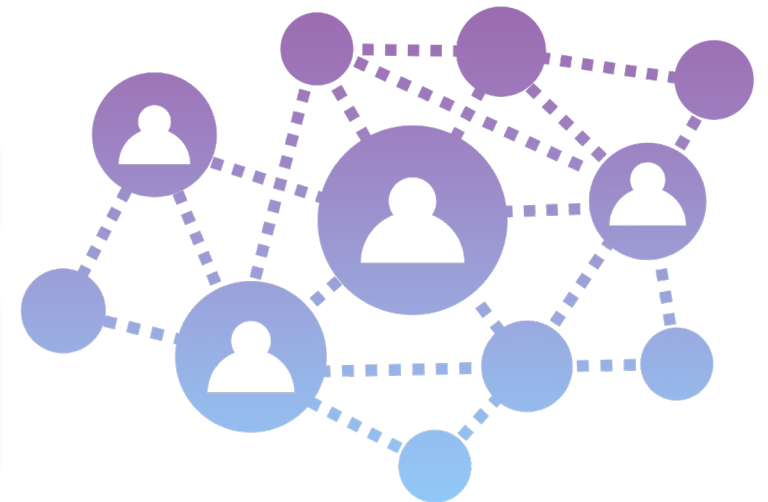
- Develop a shared agenda for change
- Build the capacity and capability of the sector
- Facilitate opportunities for Mental Health Australia members to collaborate and share information and insights

Our enablers

Our values: Curiosity • Courage • Connection

Organisational sustainability

Strengthening our financial security, culture and capability, partnerships, systems and technology to deliver better and more efficient outcomes.



How we work

Mental health is influenced by many factors, and to achieve our vision of mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities, change needs to happen at an individual level, a community level, and a society level.

Mental Health Australia drives change at a society level by uniting the voices of the mental health sector and advocating for policies that improve mental health. We recognise the impacts of social, cultural, historical and environmental determinants of mental health, and while we don't work directly to solve these issues, they influence how we work.



People with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, along with our members, are at the centre of everything we do.

We believe that...

By being curious, strengthening what's working, and adjusting what's not working, Mental Health Australia, our members, community and governments can improve the impact of our collective efforts.

By bringing together our members, the community and governments, we will create meaningful change in the mental health system.

By reforming the mental health system, people in Australia will have better health outcomes and better experiences of care.



Strategic goal 1

We drive better mental health policies and systems

Too many people continue to experience mental health conditions and have poor experiences of care. Investment in mental health does not match the level of need, and our policies, systems, infrastructure, investments and culture must continually adapt to meet needs, as they change over time.

Initiatives

Mental Health Australia will:

Set the agenda for national policy reform – based on the needs of the community, the sector, and research evidence, and by using our strong relationships and networks across the sector, the community, and the Australian Government.

Develop and advocate for practical policy solutions – which draw on:

- the expertise of Mental Health Australia members – including clinicians, service providers, researchers and representative groups; lived experience peak bodies; and people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters; all of whom represent a diversity and breadth of needs and experiences;
- evidence and insights from research, data, and practice;
- what is currently working well, and insights from on-the-ground reform implementation; and
- our in-depth understanding of government policy and political decision-making processes.

Advocate for system reforms that improve mental health and enable the mental health sector to thrive – focussing on:

- implementing better funding models;
- clarifying roles and responsibilities across systems to best support a person's journey to better mental health;
- embedding the views and expertise of people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters into policy design, implementation and evaluation;
- strengthening the mental health workforce – including primary care, clinical and allied health, psychosocial and community, peer and emerging workforces;
- strengthening the quality and safety of services and supporting innovation; and
- improving data, evidence and evaluation, along with transparency, accountability and monitoring of the system.

Outcomes

We will track our progress by:

- **Reporting on our policy advice to the Australian Government** – by listing our policy submissions and participation in major government advisory bodies in our Annual Report; and including details on the consultation processes, data, evidence and insights informing Mental Health Australia policy recommendations in major policy submissions
- **Tracking Australian Government mental health policy announcements and budget investments, compared with Mental Health Australia advice** – by publishing an analysis of Australian Government mental health Budget announcements

Strategic goal 2

We unite and strengthen the mental health sector

To achieve change, we need a strong and sustainable mental health sector that is working together.

Initiatives

Mental Health Australia will:

- **Develop a shared agenda for change** with Mental Health Australia members and representatives of lived experience organisations and groups. The shared agenda for change will outline the outcomes we will set out to change, key activities to achieve change, roles and responsibilities within the sector, how we will measure our progress, hold ourselves to account, and support one another. The shared agenda for change will be delivered through the sector with regular reporting of progress.
- **Build the capacity and capability of the sector** to meet the community's mental health needs, drive cultural change across the mental health system, and thrive in the changing reform environment.
- **Facilitate opportunities for Mental Health Australia members to collaborate and share information and insights** so that we are collectively learning more about emerging trends, research and evidence; what's working; opportunities for improvement; and how we can collectively improve our impact.

Outcomes

We will track our progress by:

- Publicly releasing our 'shared agenda for change', along with reports on implementation.
- Reporting on the reach and impact of projects and events.

Mental Health Australia

Members as of July 2024

Full Members

ALIVE National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation
Australian Association for Developmental Disability Medicine
Australian Association of Social Workers
Australasian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies (ACPP)
ASORC (The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors)
Australian BPD Foundation Ltd
Australian Clinical Psychology Association
Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
Australian Counselling Association Inc
Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation
Australian Psychological Society
Australian Rotary Health
Australian Society for Psychological Medicine
Baty Australia Limited
Beyond Blue
Bipolar Australia
Black Dog Institute
Blue Knot Foundation
Brain and Mind Centre
Butterfly Foundation
Carers Australia
Catholic Social Services Australia
Centre for Mental Health Research (ANU)
Community Mental Health Australia
Dementia Australia
Dietitians Australia
Emerging Minds
Flourish Australia
Gidget Foundation Australia
GROW
Griefline
Headspace
Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA)
Institute of Clinical Psychologists (ICP)
LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
Lifeline Australia
Liptember Foundation
Lived Experience Australia
MAGNET
Meaningful Ageing Australia
Mental Health Carers Australia
Mental Health Coalition of SA Inc
Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
Mental Health Coordinating Council
Mental Health Council of Tasmania
Mental Health First Aid Australia
Mental Health Policy Unit (MHPU), Health Research Institute at the University of Canberra
Mental Health Professionals Network

Mental Health Victoria
Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
Mind Australia
Mindgardens Neuroscience Network
National Rural Health Alliance
Neami National
NT Mental Health Coalition
Occupational Therapy Australia
Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth
Ostara Australia Limited
OzHelp Foundation
Parent-Infant Research Institute (PIRI)
Psychosis Australia Trust
Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health
Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research
R U OK? Foundation
ReachOut Australia
Relationships Australia
Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia
Rural & Remote Mental Health
SANE Australia
Sleep Health Foundation
Smiling Mind
Society for Mental Health Research
Speech Pathology Australia
Stride
SuperFriend
The Australian Music Therapy Association
The Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association (ANZACATA)
The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
TheMHS Learning Network Inc
WA Association for Mental Health
Wellways
Youturn Youth Support

Associate Members

ACT Mental Health Consumer Network
Allied Health Professions Australia
Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria
Arafmi Ltd
Being - Mental Health Consumers
Better Health Network
Breakthru
Brisbane North PHN
Care Connect
Carers ACT

CatholicCare NT
CatholicCare Victoria
Centre for Muslim Wellbeing
CoHealth
Community
Connections
Consumers of Mental Health WA (CoMHWA)
Converge International Ltd
Eating Disorders Queensland
Employee Assistance Professional Assoc of Australasia
Ending Loneliness Together
Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)
FearLess Outreach
HelpingMinds
Innowell
JobCo Employment Services Inc
Junaya Family Development Services
JUNO
KidsXpress
Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN)
Marathon Health
Mental Health Partners
Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT)
Mental Health Lived Experience Tasmania (MHLET)
Mentally Healthy WA
Mentis Assist
Micah Projects
Mind Medicine Australia
Multicap
One Door Mental Health
Opengate Institute
Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA)
Pathways SouthWest Inc
PHN Cooperative
Primary & Community Care Services Ltd
Relationships Australia Victoria
Ruah Community Services
Skylight Mental Health
Spiritual Health Association
Tandem
TeamHEALTH
The Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland
The Mover Foundation
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Tully Support Centre
Victorian Mental Illness Council (VMIAC)
WayAhead Mental Health NSW

