
MENTAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA

ANNUAL REPORT
2023-2024

mhaustralia.org



Contents

03 About Us

04 Chair and CEO Updates

08 Strategic plan

09 Highlights

10 Our work

40 Our people

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.

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.

**Mentally healthy people,
mentally healthy communities.**

From the Interim Chair Mark Orr AM

Mental Health Australia has a proud history of advocating for system reform, but collectively we still have much more to do. We need a cohesive mental health system that not only prevents mental health conditions whenever possible but also integrates services seamlessly to ensure people receive the right support, regardless of their income or location.

I am deeply honoured to have taken on the role of Interim Chair of Mental Health Australia in May 2024. Since joining the Board in July 2020, and serving as Chair of the Governance Committee since December 2022, it has been a privilege to work with such a dedicated Board and team. As we continue our mission of advocating for meaningful mental health reform, I am committed to ensuring that Mental Health Australia remains at the forefront of this critical work.

I extend my profound thanks to our former Chair, Matthew Berriman.



During his three-year tenure, Matt brought the importance of lived experience to the very heart of our organisation. His passion for amplifying the voices of people with lived and living experience of mental ill-health has been an invaluable asset to our advocacy efforts.

Our goal remains clear: driving long-term mental health reform in Australia. The next year will be crucial as we focus on collaborating with the Australian Government, our members, and those with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, as well as their families, carers, and supporters. Together, we aim to reform the mental health system in ways that fundamentally improve outcomes for all people in Australia.

This means working together on building a system that not only supports people experiencing mental health challenges, but also recognises the critical role of families, carers, and supporters. It is our responsibility to advocate for a system that meets the needs of everyone, ensuring no one is left behind.

The diversity of needs across communities means there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Our approach remains inclusive, collaborative, and grounded in the belief that mental health care must be based on human rights principles.

We were encouraged by the Australian Government's \$361 million package for mental health in the 2024 Federal Budget, and pleased to see funding for a national low-intensity digital service, which Mental Health Australia strongly advocated for. Additionally, we have long pushed for

more options for people with complex care needs beyond the Better Access program, and we are pleased to see changes to Medicare Mental Health Centres and new funding for Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

However, we must acknowledge that this funding falls far short of what is needed for comprehensive, system-wide mental health reform. The Productivity Commission's recommendations called for a significantly larger investment, and we will continue to press for this in our advocacy efforts. The work ahead is challenging, but we remain focussed on our goal of creating a mental health system that serves all people in Australia.

Mental Health Australia, with the ongoing support of our members and stakeholders, will continue to advocate for the long-term reforms necessary to transform mental health in Australia. This change is a process, and we are committed to working both publicly and behind the scenes to achieve

the outcomes our communities and the mental health sector need.

True transformation extends beyond healthcare. It involves addressing the social, economic, and environmental factors that impact mental wellbeing, including housing, education, employment, and social support. It is heartening to see some measures in this year's Budget that touch on these social determinants of mental health.

As we move forward, we must work together to promote a culture of compassion and inclusion. Mental Health Australia is excited to continue leading the charge towards an Australia with a robust, integrated mental health system—one that is accessible, properly funded, and that respects and promotes the human rights of all people.



From the CEO Carolyn Nikoloski

This past year has presented significant challenges for the mental health of people across the country. From rising costs of living to the impact of the Voice to Parliament referendum, and the ripple effects of overseas crises on family members in Australia, these events have deeply influenced the mental health landscape. Solidarity is more important than ever, and collaboration remains at the core of our work at Mental Health Australia.

Our Members Policy Forums continue to bring together key stakeholders from the mental health sector to discuss national priorities and shape our collective advocacy efforts. At our November 2023 Members Policy Forum, more than 60 member delegates gathered in Canberra to engage with government representatives and sector leaders. The discussions were instrumental in shaping our Pre-Budget Submission and policy priorities for the year ahead. In May 2024, we held a special Federal Budget-focussed forum, which brought together over 130 leaders from 77 member organ-



isations to discuss the outcomes of the Budget and next steps for mental health reform.

Our Policy and Advocacy team has worked hard over the 2023-24 financial year, preparing nine submissions to government across a diverse range of mental health priorities. From system reform and national housing to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veterans' Suicide, we have been vocal advocates for evidence-based policy changes. We also made significant contributions to informing the evolution of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and advised governments on good practice psychosocial services, together with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum. The dedication of our team, along with their strong relationships with member organisations and lived experience and family and carer advocates, has ensured that Mental Health Australia remains at the forefront of shaping a better mental health system.

One of the standout events of the last 12 months was our 2023 Parliamentary Advocacy Day, where 80 delegates representing 55 member organisations united at Parliament House in Canberra. Together, we called on the Australian Government to prioritise mental health reform. It was also an opportunity to launch our 2023 Report to the Nation, which revealed that more than half of Australians are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, and one in five are facing barriers to accessing mental health support due to cost.

The Embrace Multicultural Mental Health team continues to provide a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from

culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Their important CALD Community Engagement Project (CCEP) has been supporting community-led projects that explore mental health and suicide prevention and co-design solutions that reflect the needs of the community, in partnership with local multicultural sector organisations and bicultural workers.

In the past year, we also continued to amplify the voices of people with lived experience, and their family, carers and supporters, by working in partnership with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF), facilitating the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives, and establishing the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Group.

Our CEO Update continues to be sent out to over 5000 people every week, highlighting sector news, announcements, opportunities and the important work of our growing membership.

At Mental Health Australia, the year has seen significant changes. With great sadness, we farewelled our Chair, Matt Berriman, and Board Directors Georgie Harman and Ashley de Silva. Their contributions have been nothing short of exceptional, and they leave behind a solid foundation for our future work. I extend my gratitude to them for their leadership and dedication.

Additionally, we bid farewell to Harry Lovelock, our Director of Policy and Research, whose work has been instrumental in shaping some of the most impactful mental health policies during his tenure since joining Mental Health Australia in 2019. His departure marks the end of an era, but his contributions will continue to inspire our work going forward. As we look to the future, I've been delighted to welcome Mark Orr, CEO of Flourish Australia, who has stepped in as Interim Chair. With over 30 years of experience in mental health, disability, and LGBTQ+ health services, Mark's leadership has been invaluable.

We are also fortunate to have welcomed Dr. Evelyne Tadros, Associate Professor Melanie Turner, Ms Nicola Ballenden alongside Ms Helen Rowell, as Board Directors.

We know that societal and system change requires collective action. It's driven by the voices of those with lived and living experience of mental ill-health, backed by research and front-line expertise, and supported by legislative, funding, policy and cultural shifts. With a unified voice, we can deliver the lasting change that our communities need.

Thank you to our members for your continued support and commitment to mental health reform. We are making a difference and moving closer towards having mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities.



Strategic plan 2021-2024

Our mission is to create the best mental health system in the world.

To deliver on our vision for mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities, our work to June 2024 focusses on:

1

Promote a national voice for those with lived experience of mental illness and for those who love and care for them.

2

Highlight the social determinants for mental ill-health and advocate for lasting changes across the whole ecosystem.

3

Deliver value to our members and the wider mental health ecosystem.

Highlights of our Year



Publishing our 2023
Report to the Nation



UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA

Launching our **Mapping
Mental Health** research with
University of Canberra



12,742 sign-ups
to our World Mental
Health Day campaign



39 facilitated member
meetings with parliamentarians



Hosting the 17th annual Grace Groom Memorial
Oration with special guest orator, 2023 Australian
of the Year, **Taryn Brumfitt**

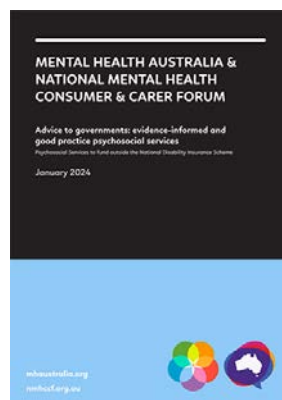


Holding our largest Members Policy Forum to date on
16 May, with over **130** CEOs, executives, and leaders
from across **77** of our member organisations



Co-hosting our MYEFO
webinar with
Minister Butler

Publishing our **Advice to
governments on evidence-
informed and good
practice psychosocial
services** with the
NMHCCF



In partnership with Suicide
Prevention Australia, hosting a
Roundtable at the **2024 National
Suicide Prevention Conference**
focused on the Embrace Project



Our work

Policy and Advocacy

Research

Events

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

Lived experience participation

World Mental Health Day campaign

Policy Submissions

Mental Health Australia develops policy submissions to influence national mental health reform, and promote mental health as a key priority across the range of government policy and funding decisions. Mental Health Australia thanks the many member organisations, including lived experience organisations, service providers, researchers, professional bodies, and state and state mental health peak bodies who contributed to these submissions, to raise a collective voice for the community and the mental health sector and recommend ways forward for government.

Towards a Blueprint: Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

July 2023

Mental Health Australia partnered with Suicide Prevention Australia and Relationships Australia to provide advice to the Defence Royal Commission on ensuring mainstream (non-veteran specific) mental health and suicide prevention services are accessible and effective for veterans, Defence personnel and their families. This paper drew on analysis of recommendations from previous research and relevant inquiries, together with two roundtable consultations with representatives from 11 member organisations and lived experience representatives. We presented our paper together in a private session with the Commissioners and policy team, where our recommendations were well received.

National Housing and Homelessness Plan consultation

October 2023

Mental Health Australia provided specific information and recommendations to this consultation based on substantive research undertaken by mental health and housing policy experts, and consultation with members on the draft plan attended by representatives from 24 service provider and lived experience organisations. Our submission focused on supports for people experiencing significant mental health challenges, while also emphasising the importance of addressing all housing insecurity to support mental health. The consultation summary report includes reference to the importance of holistic wrap around supports for housing including mental health supports as raised in our submission.



Audit of Primary Health Network program performance management

November 2023

This submission drew on targeted consultation with members providing Primary Health Network (PHN) commissioned services, to provide both broader analysis and examples highlighting areas for improvement in the Department of Health and Aged Care's performance management of this program. Mental Health Australia called for a review of the PHN Program Performance and Quality Framework to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose, increased transparency in funding and commissioning across PHNs, and improved information and data sharing across PHNs to support national monitoring. The Australian National Audit Office made eight recommendations, reflecting the themes raised in our submission, which the Department of Health and Aged Care have agreed to implement.

Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

December 2023

This submission presented research evidence and insights from targeted consultations with members delivering COVID-19 related mental health supports, to recommend strategies to increase preparedness for future pandemic events. This included research led by the Embrace Project around supports for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum regarding the experience of carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Mental Health Australia's submission and appearance before this inquiry, we were invited to facilitate a roundtable with mental health sector representatives and the inquiry Chair and Panel Member.

Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide submission

December 2023

Mental Health Australia partnered with Suicide Prevention Australia and Relationships Australia to contribute to the Defence Royal Commission's consideration of the structure of an ongoing entity to carry on systemic accountability for the wellbeing of Defence members and veterans. This submission drew on data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Australian Defence Force suicide monitoring, together with previous feedback from member organisations, and specific input from Suicide Prevention Australia's Lived Experience Panel. The recommendation of this submission was reflected in the Royal Commission's Final Report.

2024-2025 Pre-Budget Submission

January 2024

Mental Health Australia made 18 recommendations for the 2024-25 Federal Budget to address key gaps and priorities in mental health reform. The Budget delivered some action against 10 of these recommendations. Mental Health Australia prioritised and refined our recommendations through consultations with members at the November 2023 Members Policy Forum, following analysis of unimplemented recommendations of the Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health, recommendations from the Evaluation of the Better Access Initiative, and priority areas of the Mental Health Reform Advisory Committee.

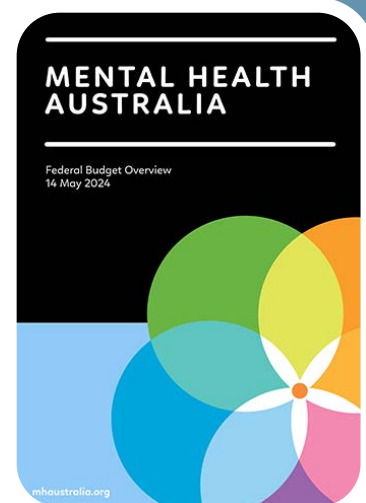
Senate Inquiry into NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill

May 2024

This submission drew on consultation with 50 member representatives in an online webinar, as well as engagement with other disability sector stakeholders. Through this submission Mental Health Australia recommended amendments to prevent potential unintended consequences of the proposed changes, and ensure the views of key stakeholders are considered in parliamentary deliberation of future legislative instruments foreshadowed by the Bill. The Government made changes which addressed partially or in full four of Mental Health Australia's six recommendations.

Federal Budget Overview 2024

On the evening of the Federal Budget - 14 May 2024 - Mental Health Australia provided our members with initial budget analysis and detailed summary of measures related to mental health and social determinants of health. This overview was sent to members within three-and-a-half hours of the Budget release, and was followed by further in-depth analysis of the Federal Budget against mental health sector priorities at our Members Policy Forum that week.



Psychosocial Services Project

In 2023-24 Mental Health Australia partnered with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (the Forum) to proactively develop Advice for governments on evidence-informed and good practice psychosocial services. We identified a need for clear advice to governments on the range of effective and valued psychosocial supports, to inform several unfolding national reform processes.

Together with the Forum, we conducted a literature scan to build a list of psychosocial services and service models, and then tested these through online consultations with over 100 experts, including people with lived experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, service providers, researchers and other key stakeholders. We further conducted two online surveys specifically for people with lived experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters, responded to by over 200 people.

Through this rigorous process we developed **Advice for governments on evidence-informed and good practice psychosocial services**, which outlines principles that should underpin psychosocial service delivery and describes a diverse array psychosocial services and models which have been shown to achieve good outcomes and are valued by people with lived experience of mental ill-health, family, carers and supporters.

Mental Health Australia and the Forum have jointly provided this advice and briefings to relevant parliamentarians and senior government officials, to advocate for much-needed investment in psychosocial services. We understand the advice is now informing policy deliberations around reform of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, development of Foundational Supports, and governments' response to the Analysis of Unmet Need in Psychosocial Support.

Research

During the 2023-2024 financial year, Mental Health Australia delivered two major research projects to address key gaps in mental health data:



Mental Health Australia 2023 Report to the Nation

Mental Health Australia's Report to the Nation provides up-to-date data on the mental health and wellbeing of people in Australia including priority populations. Released on 13 September 2023 as part of our Parliamentary Advocacy Day, the 2023 report highlighted the impact of rising costs of living on peoples' mental health, as well as financial barriers to accessing supports. The representative polling research also highlighted how beneficial people found mental health support when they did reach out for help. Mental Health Australia utilised Report to the Nation infographics and key messages to support member engagement with politicians during Advocacy Day, as well as media engagement, to support action to improve access to mental health supports.



Mapping Mental Health Care

Mental Health Australia partnered with the University of Canberra to create new online maps visually highlighting inequalities in access to mental health care. This novel research includes new estimates of the prevalence of mental ill-health across detailed geographic areas, comparing this to rates of use of Australian Government funded services. Launched on World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2023, the research highlighted the need for systemic mental health reform to ensure equitable access to care for all Australians, as well as the need for improved national data. Mental Health Australia worked with the Department of Health and Aged Care to deliver some of the first public data on use of Primary Health Network commissioned mental health services in this research. This is an important step towards greater transparency and accountability, and availability of data to inform mental health system improvement.



National Committee Representation

Throughout 2023-24, Mental Health Australia represented our members on a number of high-level government committees and stakeholder groups, to inform national mental health reform and implementation. This representation is in addition to regular meetings with the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, the Chief Psychiatrist, and the National Mental Health Commission.

Committee representation included:

- Mental Health Reform Advisory Committee (CEO appointed in own right)
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Group - Safety and Quality Group
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Data Governance Forum
- Independent Hospital Pricing Authority Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- Independent Hospital Pricing Authority Mental Health Working Group Committee
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care Digital Mental Health Advisory Committee
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Disability Representative and Carer Organisation Forum
- NDIS Reform for Outcomes Program and working groups
- NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference Group and working groups.



2023 Parliamentary Advocacy Day

On 3 September at Parliament House in Canberra, 80 delegates representing 55 Mental Health Australia member organisations from across Australia joined with a united voice to call on the government to put mental health reform back on the agenda at the 2023 Parliamentary Advocacy Day.

It was an opportunity for our members to advocate for ongoing reform and talk to our elected officials about how imperative it is to fund a multi-year mental health reform roadmap to change the trajectory of Australia's mental health.

In particular, we called on the Government to make sure all people in Australia:

- Can get support for their mental health early, before problems snowball – by increasing access to early intervention and digital mental health support
- Can access appropriate support regardless of their income or postcode – by funding psychosocial services outside the NDIS to meet community need, and designing alternative support options for people with complex needs
- Have increased access to timely care by building the mental health workforce – by releasing and funding delivery of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy.

There was strong media coverage on the day, including from The Canberra Times, News Corp (news.com.au, The Daily Telegraph and The Herald Sun), Nine Entertainment (The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age) and ABC Radio.



80

delegates

55

member organisations

39

facilitated meetings with
parliamentarians

Member Policy Forums

The Mental Health Australia Member Policy Forums bring the mental health sector together twice a year to discuss national priorities for mental health reform and collaborative action and advocacy.

Members say:

“All sessions were valuable, but the lived and living experience panel was an important sign of change in the sector required.”

“Great to have the Minister for Health and Aged Care, Assistant Minister and the Department speak - the Q&A was particularly valuable.”

“Thanks for convening, and for having the relationships and influence to get Ministers and DoHAC in the room to questions.”

At the Member Policy Forum on 29 November 2023, more than 60 member delegates came together in Canberra to hear updates from Australian Government representatives and sector leaders, and inform Mental Health Australia’s pre-budget submission and policy priorities for the next year.

Sessions were led by the Department of Health and Aged Care; representatives from the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, the National Disability Insurance Agency; Gayaa Dhuwi and ReachOut. A message from the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon Emma McBride MP was also shared.





At the special Federal Budget focussed Member Policy Forum on 16 May 2024, over 130 CEOs, executives, and leaders from across 77 of our member organisations gathered again at Old Parliament House to discuss the outcomes of the Budget and forward priorities for mental health reform.

Members heard directly from keynote speakers the Hon. Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care and the Hon. Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. The Department of Health and Aged Care also provided an update and extended response to questions on budget measures related to mental health. Mental Health Australia provided an analysis of the budget compared to sector recommendations.

Through the afternoon sessions, members discussed priorities for progress and advocacy, beginning with a panel of leading lived experience advocates discussing equity and inclusion. Members further discussed the benefits and challenges of mergers, and addressing the gap for people with complex mental health needs through facilitated concurrent sessions with expert panels. Finally, members provided input to a sector sustainability statement to prosecute during the next Federal Election.



Mental Health Australia's Member Policy Forums, 29 November 2023 and 16 May 2024.

Photos by Lisa Clarke.

Member Policy Hubs

Psychosocial Services

August - October 2023

Mental Health Australia, together with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum consulted widely with members and stakeholders to develop **Advice for governments on evidence-informed and good practice psychosocial services**. These consultations included policy hubs in August and October 2023 with a combined total of 116 attendees, specific online consultations with lived experience and carer representatives in September 2023 with a total of 32 attendees, and surveys for lived experience and carer representatives with over 200 respondents.

National Housing and Homelessness Plan

September 2023

In preparing our submission to the **National Housing and Homelessness Plan**, Mental Health Australia held an online member consultation attended by representatives from 24 service providers and lived experience organisations.

NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1) Bill 2024

May 2024

On 3 May 2024, Mental Health Australia undertook an online consultation to support development of a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into **National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1) Bill** with 50 attendees.

COVID-19 Response Inquiry Mental Health Roundtable

June 2024

On 17 June 2024, Mental Health Australia hosted an online mental health roundtable in partnership with the **COVID-19 Response Inquiry Taskforce**, facilitating an opportunity for members to provide direct input to this inquiry. Twenty members including lived experience and carer representatives, service providers and commissioners, peak and advocacy bodies and research organisations attended.

Webinars



Ministerial MYEFO Update

December 2023

On 15 December 2023, Minister Butler joined Mental Health Australia and 71 of our member representatives online to provide an update on the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) funding announcements. Members had the opportunity to ask the Minister a range of questions directly, and hear how the Government would continue working with the sector in 2024 on mental health reform.

NDIS Review Final Report Briefing

December 2023

On 18 December 2023, following the release of the NDIS Review Final Report, Mental Health Australia facilitated a briefing with Gerry Naughtin, a subject matter expert on psychosocial disability for the NDIS Review. 47 members attended to hear about the NDIS Review Final Report and recommendations, with a focus on psychosocial disability. This was followed by a Q&A session.

Member Connect Webinar with Ruth Vine

March 2024

On 13 March 2024 retiring Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Ruth Vine joined Mental Health Australia and 51 attendees for a member connect event. Dr Vine talked about her career, her reflections on mental health reform in Australia and her suggestions to the sector.



2023 Grace Groom Memorial Oration

Mental Health Australia hosted its 17th annual Grace Groom Memorial Oration at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, with special guest orator, 2023 Australian of the Year, Taryn Brumfitt.

This event pays tribute to the former Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health Council of Australia (now Mental Health Australia) – Grace Groom – and brings the sector together to recognise collective efforts in advocating for mental health reform.

During the Oration, Taryn held the room of over 100 members and guests captive with her message of body positivity.

Following the Oration, Andy Lyu was announced as the 2023 recipient of the Grace Groom Memorial Scholarship. Andy, a PhD Candidate at the Centre for Mental Health Research at ANU, will use the Scholarship funds to co-design an online gatekeeper education tool for youth suicide prevention with parents, carers, and young people in China.

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Project



Embrace Multicultural Mental Health (the Embrace Project) provides a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The Embrace Project works towards an equitable mental health system which reflects and responds well to the needs of Australia's multicultural population.

Over the past year, the Embrace Project team has engaged with Alliance partners — the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA), the Embrace Lived Experience Group, and the Stakeholder Group to ensure Project activities reflect and respond to the issues affecting the mental health of CALD communities.

Embrace website

The Embrace website is an information hub providing Australian mental health services and multicultural communities access to resources, links to services, translated materials, best practice examples, and information in a culturally accessible format.

New resources are added to the website regularly, and the site attracts around 6,000 monthly site visits. The quarterly Embrace e-newsletter, which features project updates, sector developments and partner news, is distributed to over 3,700 people.

Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia

The Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (the Framework) is a free, nationally available online resource which enables organisations and individual practitioners to evaluate and enhance their cultural responsiveness. It offers practical guidance on how services can address areas for improvement and build on existing strengths.

The Embrace Project has supported 13 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to implement the Framework, including completing organisational assessments and implementing action plans.

Learnings and best practice examples collated through this engagement form the basis of the following four resources, designed to serve as practical guides for implementing the Framework:

1. PHN Framework Implementation Guide
2. Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia | Action Plan Template
3. PHN Action Examples Fact Sheet
4. PHN Best Practice Case Studies Fact Sheet

The Embrace Project will continue to support PHNs and their commissioned services to provide culturally responsive mental health care and respond to the needs of CALD communities. During the year, the Embrace Project conducted two webinars on the Framework, attracting over 600 registrations from across Australia. This is reflective of the level of interest in the mental health sector and suicide prevention services in providing culturally responsive support.

The total number of users registered for the Framework as of 30 June 2024 is 2,497. Sign up and access the Framework at:

<https://framework.embracementalhealth.org.au/>



CALD Community Engagement Project

The Embrace Project launched the CALD Community Engagement Project (CCEP) in 2021 to strengthen engagement and build partnerships with CALD communities for improved mental health support.

The CCEP works alongside selected CALD communities to identify mental health needs and collaboratively design culturally relevant solutions and resources. In the 2023-2024 financial year, the project engaged six organisations to co-design a range of resources with select multicultural communities.

The following resources have been developed by three communities in partnership with community organisations:

Pasifika and Māori community in Queensland partnership with Brisbane South PHN Ltd

The Pasifika and Māori community and Brisbane South Primary Health Network (BSPHN) developed videos promoting mental health strategies and resources that highlight the importance of Pasifika and Māori values in shaping mental wellbeing, fostering greater understanding and support within the community.

Afghani Community in Adelaide, South Australia partnership with STTARS

People from Afghanistan supported by Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) in Adelaide, have developed two videos addressing mental health stigma in Dari and Pashto. Featuring local community members, religious scholars, and mental health professionals, the videos aim to normalise mental health discussions and reduce stigma through culturally relevant information. Additionally, there are two mental health brochures, created with input from community members and professionals, provide information on mental health and self-care practices in English and Dari.

Women from African communities in Perth partnership with Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Service

A collaboration between a community of African women and Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services in Perth, created a language-based video that addresses mental health concepts and encourages healthy behaviors. Additionally, an educational booklet and a youth pamphlet have been created to explain the genocide, its effects and coping with trauma.



L-R: STARS and Brisbane South PHN Ltd.

Currently more resources are under development by another three communities and community organisations, with completion anticipated by the end of 2024:

Tamil community in Sydney, New South Wales
 partnership with Anglicare Sydney

The Ezidi community in Armidale, New South Wales
 partnership with NSW Service for the Treatment and
 Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)

CALD communities, Australian Capital Territory
 partnership with Multicultural Hub Canberra

Over the four-year period of the Project, 11 multicultural communities will participate in the Project through partnerships with community-based organisations, employing tailored engagement strategies to meet diverse community needs.

Partner organisations are working directly with communities through bicultural and bilingual workers to identify specific mental health needs and co-design culturally tailored solutions. Engagement methods are customised to honour each community's cultural practices, fostering safety and trust.

A broad range of resources in multiple languages, including videos, written guides, podcasts, and community radio content, is available on the Embrace website and for community use.

The Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) is evaluating the CCEP, with findings expected in mid-2025. These insights will inform best practices, strengthen sector knowledge, and expand capacity for community-based mental health support.



Embrace Suicide Prevention Project

Delivered this year through a collaboration between Mental Health Australia, Suicide Prevention Australia (SPA), and R U OK?, Phase 1 of the Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot (ESPP) sought to further inform best practice and increase sector and community capacity to prevent suicide in multicultural communities.

Across the year the ESPP piloted:

1

Expanded use of the Embrace Framework for Multicultural Australia within suicide prevention through organisation wide implementation within R U OK?

2

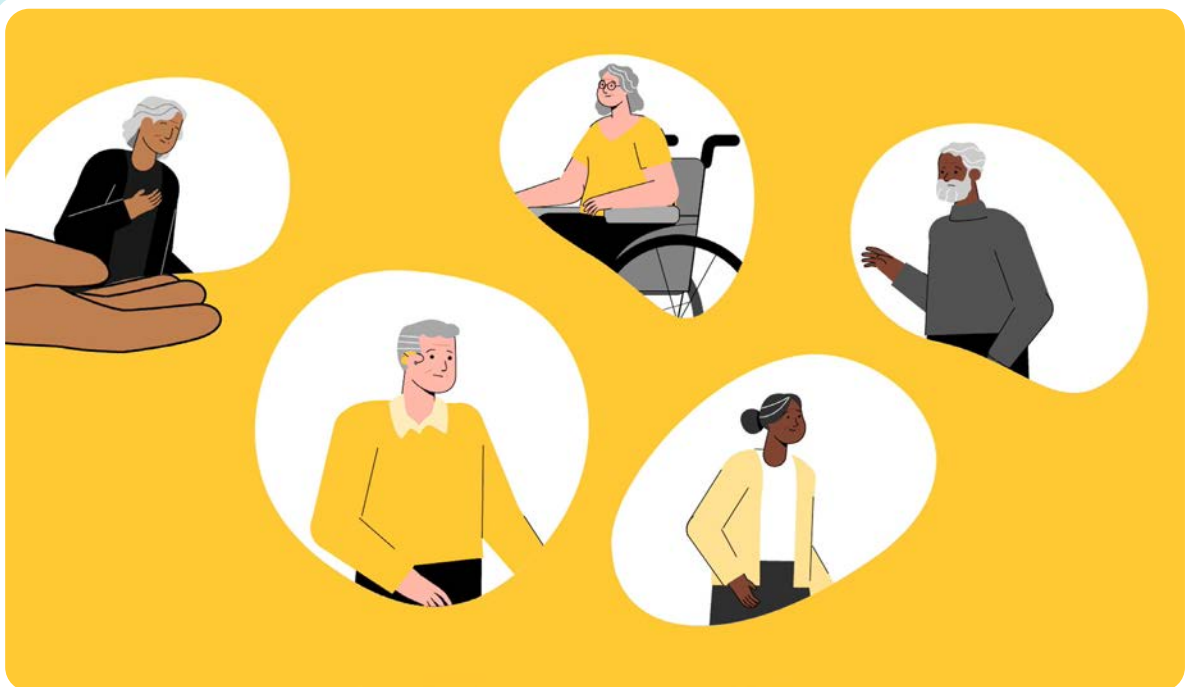
An approach for effective CALD community engagement and resource co-design with three community groups - Arabic, Hindi and Vietnamese – led by R U OK?

Successful outcomes of the first year included:

- New insights and learnings that contributed to an increased understanding of best practice guidance that will ensure the Framework continues to evolve and adapt to user needs
- R U OK? resources, co-designed with Arabic, Hindi and Vietnamese communities across Sydney and Melbourne, that help to empower communities and provide a sustainable way for communities to begin conversations for suicide prevention
- A living blueprint to support others when undertaking co-design with CALD communities in the context of suicide prevention, building capacity throughout the sector
- Early development of a comprehensive repository of relevant suicide prevention resources for CALD communities, sector capacity and research, linked across Embrace and SPA resource/learning hubs.

In partnership with SPA, Embrace hosted a Roundtable at the 2024 National Suicide Prevention Conference, marking a significant milestone for the ESPP. Drawing on the insights shared, this Roundtable was instrumental in shaping the development of Phase 2 activities.

Members of the Embrace Lived Experience Group facilitated and formed a powerful Lived Experience Panel that offered the sector an opportunity to deepen its understanding and awareness of culturally responsive suicide prevention. Through the powerful voices of those with lived experience and those who work closely with communities in this context, the panel highlighted the urgent need for inclusive, culturally responsive approaches in our collective mission to prevent suicide within CALD communities.



Video still: R U OK?

Lived Experience Participation and Leadership

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum



The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) is a combined national voice for consumers and carers participating in sector development and mental health policy in Australia. The NMHCCF has 23 members made up of 11 mental health consumers and 12 mental health carers.

The NMHCCF is auspiced by Mental Health Australia.

The NMHCCF met online in December 2023 and March 2024, and in person in May 2024. The NMHCCF also has several working groups that meet regularly online to progress the Forum's core business. These are the:

1. Advocacy Working Group;
2. Consumer and Carer Leadership Working Group;
3. Peer Workforce Working Group;
4. Psychosocial Disability Working Group.

Activities being conducted under the working groups include an advocacy brief on the sexual safety of consumers in mental health inpatient units, a peer workforce checklist for organisations inducting peer workers and a theory of change for the NMHCCF.

Mental Health Reform Activities



Position statements, submissions and reports can be viewed at <https://nmhccf.org.au/>

Position statements

- NMHCCF Official Statement on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Final Report
- NMHCCF Official Statement on the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) Final Report
- Easy Read: NMHCCF Position Statement on Psychosocial Disability
- Easy Read: NMHCCF Position Statement on the NDIS Review Final Report.

Submissions

- 'Advice to Governments on Evidence-Informed and Good Practice Psychosocial Services'
- Submission: The NDIS Participant Experience in Rural, Regional, and Remote Australia (nmhccf.org.au)
- Submission to the Department of Social Services NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce Consultation (nmhccf.org.au)
- Submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the Getting the NDIS Back on Track Bill
- Submission to the Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (nmhccf.org.au).

Reports

- NDIS Review Consultations held by the NMHCCF: Summary Report Released.

Network policy engagement

The NMHCCF engaged with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and the broader disability community to provide input into the following submissions and position statements:

- Development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Release of the Disability Royal Commission final report
- Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework
- Employment and Income Support in relation to the Disability Support Pension
- Informing final submissions to the NDIS Independent Review and feedback to the NDIS Review Final Report
- First Implementation Report under Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Position statement on human rights provisions to be covered under federal law
- Position statement on access to supports for older people with disability
- Feedback to the Disability Royal Commission Final Report
- Blueprint for a Stronger Not-for-Profit Sector
- Aviation White Paper
- International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy
- New Disability Centre of Excellence.

Meetings

- Quarterly AFDO Members Forums and AFDO Network Policy Forums
- Disability Representative Organisation Forums: 26 July 2023, 11 October 2023, 13 December 2023, 27 February 2024, 28 May 2024.
- Disability Representative and Carer Organisations Forums: 18 August 2023, 23 November 2023, 22 February 2024, 16 May 2024.
- Reform for Outcomes (RFO) Implementation Steering Committee meetings: 3 October 2023, 31 October 2023, 5 December 2023, 6 February 2024, 5 March 2024, 6 May, 17 June 2024.
- RFO Evidence-based Working Group meetings – 17 July 2023, 25 July 2023, 4 August 2023, 8 September 2023, 12 October 2023, 9 November 2023, 7 December 2023, 21 February 2024, 9 May 2024.



Consultations

The NMHCCF membership provides input on numerous national policy issues and attends both internal and external consultations as part of its engagement strategy.

- Consultation on the Disability Services and Inclusion Bill 2023
- Consultation with the NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce
- Consultation on the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024
- Consultations with the NMHCCF membership on 19 and 26 April 2024 on the NDIS Worker and Provider Registration Taskforce and the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024
- Consultation with the NMHCCF membership on the NMHCCF's Disability Royal Commission response – 11 January 2024
- Consultation with the NMHCCF membership on the NDIS Participant Experience in Rural, Regional, and Remote Australia – 22 January 2024
- Consultation with the NMHCCF membership on its official response to the NDIS Review – 18 December 2023
- Input and feedback was provided to the NCF through consortium lead AFDO when requested for the following policy submissions and statements:
 - NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024
 - NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce
 - Registration of Providers Principles
 - Joint Media Statement on the Federal Budget by DROs
 - Joint Statement by DROs to the Senate Community Affairs Committee's Report on Changes to the NDIS Act 2013.



Psychosocial Disability

The NMHCCF receives funding from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) to represent the needs of those living with a psychosocial disability. Activities include ongoing engagement, consultation, participation, and representation in Disability Representative Organisation (DRO) meetings, workshops, and forums including Australia's Disability Strategy National Forum.

The Psychosocial Disability working group hosted the **Lived Experience Leading the Way: National Psychosocial Disability Roundtable**. The successful event was held on 20 June 2024 at the ParkRoyal, Melbourne Airport, 72 people attended in person and 19 people online. Attendees comprised Lived Experience leaders, policy and decision makers and key stakeholder organisation representatives. Highlights of the day included a keynote speaker, insightful table discussions and activities and panel discussions.

Mental Health Australia and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum partnered to develop a list of evidence based psychosocial services. This collaborative project can be read about further on Page 14.

National Register

The National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives consists of trained representatives working at the national level to provide a strong consumer and carer voice in the mental health sector. Members have opportunities to apply for national level representative positions, attend events and training, and network with peers and the broader mental health sector.

Since July 2023, the consumer and carer selection panel (with representatives from the NMHCCF and National Register Secretariat) has conducted seven selection processes, choosing eight consumer representatives and nine carer representatives for the following new opportunities:

1

One consumer and one carer worked with the Department of Health and Aged Care in the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy Working Group

2

Four consumers and four carers plus one lived experience workshop facilitator worked on the National Strategy for Homelessness and Housing

3

One carer was the on the Safe Spaces Standards Scoping Study – Lived Experience Working Group

4

One consumer and one carer were part of Mental Health Australia's and the NMHCCF's Psychosocial Support Services Project

5

Two consumers and two carers were in the NMHCCF Project Steering Group to establish participant cohorts and consultations for a project with the NDIS Independent Review

6

One consumer and one carer were involved in Silverline Health Care's lived experience stories and advice to mental health skills training course for GPs

7

10 consumers gave input into Swinburne University's Mental Health online course

8

Three consumers and three carers gave input into Nous Group's workshop on Mental Health National Outcome and Casemix Collection.

Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop

Each year, Mental Health Australia hosts the **Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop** for members of the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives and the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum and the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Mental Health Consumer and Carer Group from the National Multicultural Mental Health Project.

In line with the changing landscape of mental health lived experience, the theme of the 2024 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop was **Times of Change – Celebrating Milestones and Embracing Positive Transformation**. This two day Canberra workshop in May 2024 was attended by 55 mental health lived experience representatives.

Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Group

Mental Health Australia has been engaged by the Department of Health and Aged Care to establish a Lived Experience Group to provide diverse lived experience perspectives into the governance and implementation of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement.

To ensure a person-centred mental health and suicide prevention system for all people living in Australia, the National Agreement requires those with experience of mental ill health and/or suicide and their families and carers are consulted throughout its implementation.

A Lived Experience Group (LEG) induction meeting was conducted in Canberra in February 2024. Governance documents and support mechanisms were discussed and workshopped at the meeting. Members of the LEG will provide input and advice to MHSPSO working and projects groups to ensure lived experienced representation.

World Mental Health Day

**Look after your
mental health,
Australia.**



**World Mental Health Day
10 October**

Join the campaign at

www.lookafteryourmentalhealth.org.au



Look after your mental health, Australia

Each year Mental Health Australia runs the World Mental Health Day campaign to raise mental health awareness, promote help-seeking behaviours, reduce stigma, and foster connections in communities.

The 2023 World Mental Health Day campaign launched in September and ran through to the end of October. The 2023 campaign retained slogan used in the last three years of campaigns: “Look after your mental health, Australia”, aiming to:

- Reduce stigma by encouraging individuals, mental health consumers and carers, high-profile Australians, and workplaces to promote positive mental health and wellbeing messages;
- Raise awareness, belonging, and connection by sharing those positive mental health and wellbeing messages; and
- Encourage action by asking people to register via the website or make a promise to “Look after your mental health, Australia.”

As part of the 2023 campaign, Mental Health Australia produced and shared a new mental health month tip calendar, posters, daily social media tiles with wellbeing tips, reels with wellbeing tips from experts, and a digital photo mosaic.

Mental Health Australia commissioned an independent evaluation of the campaign and findings show some of the reasons people and organisations were involved include:

- Having an eagerness to raise awareness and destigmatise mental ill-health in the community, both in personal and professional life
- Lived experience of mental ill-health or supporting for someone with mental ill-health
- An opportunity to learn tips to look after their mental health
- Appreciation of the quality of the information, e.g., being relevant to their professional or educational life.



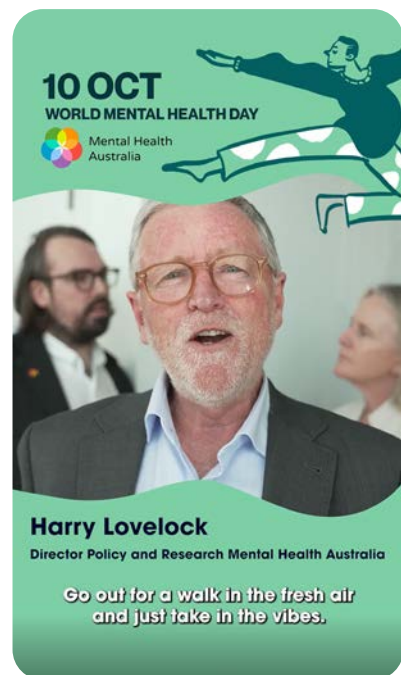
By the numbers:



89% said the presenters in our reels were **relatable**

88% said the presenters in our reels were **credible**

84% said the presenters in our reels were **engaging**



Our People



Mental Health Australia's success depends on the experience and dedication of our staff. The team combines extensive skills in policy, government relations, program development, multicultural mental health, membership management, stakeholder engagement planning, communications, event management, business, governance, management and administration.

Workforce diversity and inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion are a priority for Mental Health Australia, and we strive to create an inclusive culture and work practices in which differences are recognised and valued. Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee worked together on our second Innovate RAP, ready for implementation in 2024/25. Each year Mental Health Australia provides staff access to cultural training and actively participates in Reconciliation and NAIDOC week events.

Promoting employee health, safety and wellbeing

Employee health, safety and well-being are of the utmost importance to Mental Health Australia, and we work to continuously improve our workplace. An array of preventative health measures and well-being supports are provided to staff, including mindfulness sessions, influenza vaccinations, and corporate subsidies for individual health and fitness activities. All staff have access to Mental Health First Aid Training and Accidental Counsellor Training, and the Employee Assistance program continued to be available and promoted to all employees.

During the year, there were no notifiable accidents or dangerous occurrences arising out of work and there were no compensation claims.

Staff as at 30 June 2024:

Amy Byrne

Senior HR Officer

Breanna Bolijkovac

Project & Administration Officer
National Register / NMHCCF

Carolyn Nikoloski

Chief Executive Officer

Crystal Paniccia

Embrace - Senior Program Manager

Danica Browne

Manager Lived Experience Programs

Ebenezer Swan

Senior Policy and Projects Officer –
Psychosocial Disability

Emma Coughlan

Senior Policy and Projects Officer

Emma Greeney

Director of Policy and Advocacy

Ingrid Hatfield

Deputy Director Policy and Research

Kath Sequoia

Director of Membership, Governance &
Company Secretary

Kelsey Hilder

Executive Assistant

Kylie Bartlett

Senior Finance & Corporate Services
Officer

Lee Davidson

Membership & Governance Officer

Lisa Clarke

Communication & Events Manager

Michelle Possingham

Director of Programs

Nikki Hogan

Senior Events & Website Manager

Odette Fuller

Team Support Officer

Ruth Das

Embrace - Engagement & Partnerships
Lead

Samantha Lilley

Embrace Project Officer

Simon Ash

Director Corporate Services

Urooj Hanafi

Embrace Senior Project Officer

Wendy Anderson

Manager Lived Experience Programs

Our Board

Mental Health Australia is governed by a Board of up to ten Directors. In 2023/24 our Constitution required that the Board consist of at least three and up to eight Elected Directors, and up to two Board Appointed Directors.

Mr Mark Orr AM

Interim Chair
April 2024 - present
Elected Director
2020 - present

Mr Matthew Berriman

Appointed Director/Chair
December 2021 – April 2024

Mr Ashley de Silva

Elected Director
2019 - January 2024

Ms Georgie Harman

Elected Director
2017 - November 2023

Dr Cathy Andronis

Elected Director
December 2020 – present

Professor Sharon Lawn (Nanai)

Elected Director
December 2021 – present

Ms Tamara Cavenett (Priesley)

Elected Director
November 2022 - present

Ms Marie Piu

Elected Director
November 2022 - present

Dr Evelyne Tadros

Elected Director
November 2023 – present

Ms Helen Rowell

Board Appointed Director
April 2024 – present

Ms Nicola Ballenden

Elected Director
January 2024 – present

Associate Prof Melanie Turner

Elected Director
November 2023 - present

Member organisations

as of 30 June 2024

Mental Health Australia membership has grown steadily over the last financial year and currently includes 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.

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 Music Therapy Association
Australian Psychological Society
Australian Rotary Health
Australian Society for Psychological Medicine
Batyr 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 Foundation 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 Mental Health Consumer Alliance
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 Australia
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
Communify
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 Movember Foundation
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Tully Support Centre
Victorian Mental Illness Council (VMIAC)
WayAhead Mental Health NSW



**Mentally healthy people,
mentally healthy communities.**

mhaustralia.org