



Mental Health  
Australia

# ANNUAL REPORT

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2024/25



Mentally healthy people,  
Mentally healthy communities.

# CONTENTS

<b>About Us</b>	3
<b>Chair's Welcome</b>	5
<b>CEO's Welcome</b>	7
<b>Mental Health Australia Strategy</b>	9
<b>Strategic Goal 1: We drive better mental health policies and systems</b>	9
Federal Election Platform	9
Influencing Health and Mental Health Ministers Meetings	11
Policy Submissions	13
Psychosocial Supports Advocacy	15
Federal Budget Overview	15
National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network	15
National Committee Representation	16
Media and Communications	16
<b>Strategic Goal 2: We unite and strengthen the mental health sector</b>	17
Shared Agenda for Change	17
Building capacity and capability through Embrace Multicultural Mental Health	18
World Mental Health Day Campaign	23
Sector Engagement	24
<b>How we work</b>	29
Lived Experience Participation and Partnership	30
<b>Our people</b>	34
Membership	35
Our Board	38
Our Team	39
<b>Thank You</b>	41



## Mental Health Australia

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.



Mental Health  
Australia

# ABOUT US

**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 150 members, including service providers, professional bodies, organisations representing people with mental health challenges and their families, carers and kin, 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 health challenges, family, carers and kin, 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.



Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski





Chair, Dr Peggy Brown AO

# CHAIR'S WELCOME

**I was honoured to be appointed Chair of Mental Health Australia in January 2025, and it has been a privilege to serve in this role for nearly six months.**

As I reflect on this period, it is clear that the need for our work is greater than ever. Australians continue to feel the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis, housing pressures, climate change, and world events – all of which have profound effects on mental health. Demand for mental health services is increasing, particularly among young people, and the urgency for transformational change is undeniable.

While the NDIS has been life changing for many people with psychosocial disability, their family, carers and kin, overall, there remains a need for a more tailored and effective use of the funding committed to the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability. We know that almost half a million Australians are also missing out on the psychosocial supports they need outside the NDIS. This evidence underlines our shared responsibility to advocate for systemic reform and to hold governments accountable for ensuring people get the support and care they need.

This period has seen a significant shift in advocacy for those with lived experience and their families, carers and kin with the commencement of two new national independent lived experience peaks through the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance and Mental Health Carers Australia. This also saw a fundamental shift for Mental Health Australia with the conclusion of the National Register of Consumer and Carer Representatives and the auspicing of the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum ending on 30 June 2025. Members of both the National Register and Forum significantly influenced policy development over the past couple of decades, and it will be important for this advocacy to become even stronger through the lived experience peak bodies.

The Albanese Government was returned for a second term in May 2025, and we welcomed the recognition of the importance of mental health through Labor's significant election commitment of \$1 billion to fill the gaps in support with new free mental health services that are better matched to the needs of each Australian.

Mental Health Australia looks forward to working with the Australian Government to support the further design and implementation of these commitments, along with broader mental health reform, to make a lasting difference for people needing mental health support across Australia. Importantly, we will continue to call for an independent National Mental Health Commission to provide robust monitoring and accountability, ensuring progress toward a system that is equitable, sustainable and person-centred.

Mental Health Australia launched its Strategy 2024–2029 in July 2024, which – developed in consultation with members and stakeholders – builds on the organisation’s 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. As Chair, I am committed to ensuring this vision is realised through sustained leadership and collaboration.

Mental Health Australia continues to advocate across multiple areas to strengthen the foundations of our mental health system, reform funding models and address support gaps. We need to both tackle underlying drivers of mental ill-health through greater investment in prevention and early intervention, and improve access to effective supports – both clinical and non-clinical.

Looking ahead, I am committed to building on the foundations of our strong partnerships, particularly with people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges, their families, carers and kin, and our member organisations.

As mental health challenges become more prevalent and at times complex, our sector must evolve and be driven by our values. For us at Mental Health Australia, this centres on being curious, courageous and connected. By adapting to change and demonstrating sector unity, we can influence meaningful reform and drive progress towards our vision of mentally healthy people, mentally healthy communities.

My sincere thanks to Mark Orr AM, for his steadfast leadership as Interim Chair, over the past eight months while the search for a new Chair was underway. I have also appreciated Mark’s support in his current role as Deputy Chair. It has been a privilege to work with such a dedicated Board and team. As we advance our mission to drive meaningful mental health reform, I remain dedicated to position Mental Health Australia as the leading force in this vital work.

Thank you to the Board, our members, and the team at Mental Health Australia for their dedication, passion and tireless efforts. Together, we will continue to push for the transformation that Australians need and deserve.



**Dr Peggy Brown AO**

Chair



Chief Executive Officer, Carolyn Nikoloski

# CEO'S WELCOME

**The 2024–25 year has been a period of significant activity and achievement for Mental Health Australia.**

This year the Board and team continued to progress our vision for Mentally healthy people, mentally healthy communities, through a renewed **Strategy 2024 – 2029**. The Strategy sets out two clear Strategic Goals:

1. We drive better mental health policies and systems.
2. We unite and strengthen the mental health sector.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with our member organisations, the Australian Government, and importantly, people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges and their families, carers and kin. It reflects our commitment to a proactive, preventive, responsive and human rights-based mental health system.

Policy and advocacy have remained at the heart of our work. A key focus for us in the last year has been influencing the 2025 Federal election.

In December 2024, Mental Health Australia launched our **Vision Statement: A mentally healthy Australia**, which set out our action plan to create a mentally healthy Australia over the next term of government.

Our Vision Statement set a course for improving Australia's mental health by calling on the Australian Government to overhaul the foundations of the mental health system, match funding to the scale of the problem and community expectation, and embed an equitable, inclusive, human rights-based approach to care and support.

We commissioned polling that was released alongside the Vision Statement, which revealed that 81% of voters are concerned about mental health, with 75% calling for greater government action. This strong public sentiment underscores the urgency of reform and the importance of our advocacy.

Our election platform also included a **Case for Change**, which called for all parties to commit to free mental health care for everyone under the age of 25, and a **Sector Sustainability Statement**, which outlined seven key actions to improve funding and contracting arrangements to ensure certainty for the community and sector providing mental health support.

We were encouraged to see both Labor and Liberal parties recognise the vital investment needed in mental health through their respective \$1 billion election commitments. Mental Health Australia looks forward to working with the Government to build on these commitments.

In addition to our election platform, across the year we also developed seven major policy submissions and four incoming parliamentary briefs; advocated for systemic reform through our Pre-Budget Submission; established a Mental Health Sector Advisory Group and Network; and influenced interjurisdictional meetings of Health and Mental Health Ministers. A key highlight was facilitating a historic stakeholder forum in June 2025, bringing together lived experience leaders, sector representatives and all Health and Mental Health Ministers.



Embrace Multicultural Mental Health (Embrace), which focuses on improving the mental health of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, particularly through building the capacity and capability of mainstream mental health organisations, achieved significant milestones across the year. Over 300 new organisations registered for the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia and we successfully completed the CALD Community Engagement Project, spanning 11 communities across 12 projects. The Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot also progressed in partnership with Suicide Prevention Australia.

This period also marked the conclusion of long-standing lived experience structures, with the final year of our 23-year partnership with the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, and the conclusion of the National Register of Consumer and Carer Representatives. We acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary contributions of both groups, whose legacies continue to shape national policy and advocacy.

Our 2024 World Mental Health Day campaign – “Meaningful Connections Matter” – engaged millions across the country, featuring 12 lived experience storytellers and practical mental health calendars. The campaign reached 2.5 million people through social media engagement and generated nearly 7 million impressions.

We continued our engagement and consultation with members and stakeholders through our events and activities. Highlights included:

- Our largest-ever Member Policy Forums in Melbourne and Canberra, attended by more than 120 member representatives at each event.
- In partnership with the Parliamentary Friends Groups of Mental Health and Youth Mental Health, we hosted the inaugural Mental Health Sector Expo at Parliament House, which brought together 120 member representatives with parliamentarians and staffers. The Expo provided a unique platform for members to engage directly with parliamentarians,

showcasing sector achievements and promoting mental health supports in local electorates. It was a landmark event that elevated the visibility of mental health initiatives and strengthened relationships with policymakers.

- The 18th Grace Groom Memorial Oration, delivered by Her Excellency the Governor-General, the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, who spoke powerfully on care and kindness.
- A program of six national webinars and the continuation of our weekly CEO Update to over 5,000 subscribers, ensuring strong connection and information sharing with our members.

In January 2025 we were thrilled to have Dr Peggy Brown AO, appointed as Mental Health Australia’s Chair, and I thank Mark Orr AM, for his leadership and counsel as Interim Chair and since Dr Brown’s appointment, his continued support as Deputy Chair. We farewelled Board Directors, Dr Cathy Andronis, Tamara Cavenett, and Marie Pui, and welcomed new Board Directors, Rachel Fishlock, Katrina Armstrong and Sara Quinn.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our members, Board and the Mental Health Australia team for their continued commitment. Together, we are making progress towards a system that is more responsive, inclusive and effective – and, most importantly, towards a future where mentally healthy people live in mentally healthy communities.

As we look ahead, Mental Health Australia remains committed to driving bold reform and working with all stakeholders to build a mentally healthy future for every person in Australia.



**Carolyn Nikoloski**

CEO

# MENTAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA STRATEGY

## ● STRATEGIC GOAL 1

We drive better mental health policies and systems

### Goal:

To achieve our goal of driving better mental health policies and systems, we instigate, develop and advocate for practical policy solutions.

### Initiatives:

As the national independent peak body for mental health, Mental Health Australia sets the agenda for national policy reform. We develop and advocate for practical policy solutions, and advocate for system reforms that improve mental health and enable the mental health sector to thrive.

## Federal Election Platform

**We released our Federal Election Platform across two launches between December 2024 and February 2025, to leverage member engagement, generate continued media coverage and retain public and political presence in the lead up to the May 2025 Federal Election.**

Our Federal Election Strategy had three main components:

A **Vision Statement** for a mentally healthy Australia, which provided the overarching trajectory for mental health reform over the next term of government. This statement was released on 13 December along with **polling** commissioned from Redbridge Group demonstrating the importance of mental health to Australian voters.

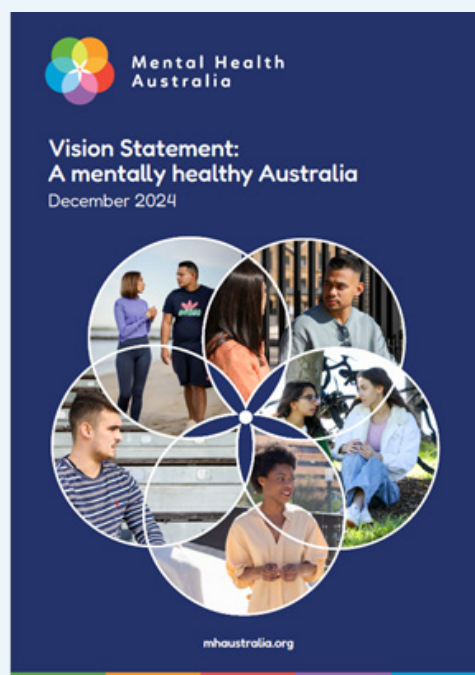


Image of the Mental Health Australia Vision Statement

A **Sector Sustainability Statement** outlined 7 key changes for immediate implementation to improve federal funding and contracting processes for mental health services. We released this statement on 27 February, calling on all parties and independents to **pledge their support** to deliver the 7 asks if elected.

A **Case for change** for free mental health support for children and young people was released on 27 February. This key policy pitch was developed in response to the concerning trends in mental health in children and young people, and was designed to keep the pressure on the major parties to increase their mental health election commitments. Mental Health Australia engaged with members and stakeholders with particular child and youth expertise to develop our case for change and support widescale media engagement.

Following release of our three-part Election Platform, Mental Health Australia welcomed bi-partisan commitments to increased funding for mental health in the lead up to the 3 May Federal Election. Both the **Coalition's \$900m** and **Australian Labor Party's \$1bn** commitments on mental health reflected the themes of Mental Health Australia's **Case for Change** for free mental health support for children and young people.



Image of the Sector Sustainability Statement

Image of the Case for Change for free mental health support for children and young people



#### Federal Election Platform – News Coverage

### ‘There were times I couldn’t leave the house’: Diagnosis that changed Aussie woman’s life

“Mental Health Australia policy and advocacy director Emma Greeney said the nation was seeing some “staggering rates” of mental distress. She said intervening early was “so important” but cost was impacting whether people got the support they needed.

Ms Greeney said some young people were being forced to choose between paying their rent or for a psychologist appointment.

“We hope that the next Australian government makes a bold commitment to address this imbalance,” she said.”

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News Corp Australia

Excerpt from: <https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/mental-health/there-were-times-i-couldnt-leave-the-house-diagnosis-that-changed-aussie-womans-life/news-story/7cb6f4ffd156f0007068da2708985e0a>

**Our Election Platform attracted other media coverage including:**

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/worldtoday/free-mental-health-care-urged-for-young-people/104990000>

<https://www.news.com.au/national/australias-most-stressed-state-revealed/news-story/c9d15817e1cf34a7321b08a62f326c1d?btr=4ec93e724cbeaee0473d5d7789f3cf73>

<https://www.pedestrian.tv/news/young-australian-mental-health-funding/>

## Influencing Health and Mental Health Ministers Meetings

**The establishment of the first Health and Mental Health Ministers meetings in August 2024 marked the first time in years that all federal, state and territory Health and Mental Health Ministers would come together to facilitate joint decision making on health issues of national importance. These meetings are a key opportunity to progress interjurisdictional reform.**

### August 2024 Meeting

Mental Health Australia led collective advocacy to influence the outcomes of the 16 August interjurisdictional Health and Mental Health Ministers Meeting. We undertook significant consultations with members and key stakeholders to inform and refine recommendations for Ministers, and developed a **'Statement of Priorities'** strategically framed around the meeting agenda. This statement was endorsed by 80 member organisations.



Image of the Statement of Priorities document

Mental Health Australia briefed the Minister for Health and Aged Care and Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care on the statement, and worked with state and territory peak bodies to provide the statement to jurisdictional counterparts. We received positive Ministerial feedback on the value of this coordinated advocacy, and were successful in achieving two of our three key recommendations for the meeting – with release of the analysis of unmet need for psychosocial support and commitment to ongoing twice-yearly Ministerial meetings.

### June 2025 meeting

Mental Health Australia facilitated a mental health lived experience and stakeholder forum for all Health and Mental Health Ministers ahead of their joint meeting on 13 June 2025. The first of its kind, this forum brought together nine influential leaders across the mental health sector and lived experience organisations to inform Ministers' deliberations on national mental health priorities.

Given the deeply interjurisdictional nature of the meeting, we coordinated our advocacy efforts with State and Territory peak bodies and engaged with Mental Health Australia members to inform our policy asks.



This work culminated in two key platform documents, provided to all Ministers:

1. A **joint open letter with all State and Territory mental health peak bodies on actions to address unmet need for psychosocial support** – calling for a recommendation to National Cabinet for a shared funding arrangement, and commitment to public consultation.
2. A **Statement on National Child and Youth Mental Health Priorities** which outlined six specific recommendations for agreement at this meeting.



Image of the Joint Open Letter on actions to address unmet need for psychosocial support

Mental Health Australia undertook significant stakeholder engagement including with members, Ministers' advisors and the Department of Health and Aged Care in the lead up to the Ministers' meeting, to support and influence strategic meeting outcomes as far as possible. While overall the **meeting outcomes** were disappointing – with few actionable commitments – our advocacy was effective in securing greater commitment than would otherwise have been the case, including a commitment to addressing unmet needs for psychosocial support and prioritising children and young people through the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement.

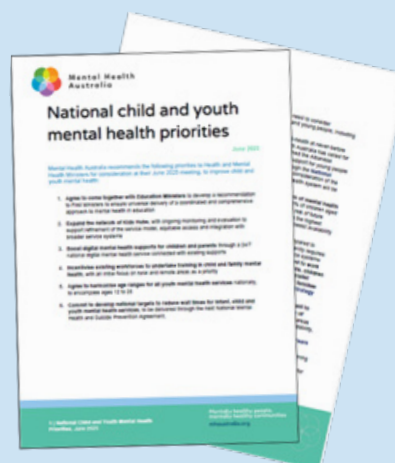


Image of the Statement on National Child and Youth Mental Health Priorities document

## Mental health meeting 'first test' for Anthony Albanese

"Following the Albanese government's landslide win, Mental Health Australia wrote to Commonwealth and state leaders warning the sector was "still waiting on a plan" to close the gap in services that saw nearly half a million people miss out on the psychosocial support they needed in 2022–23. This ongoing gap in psychosocial supports outside the NDIS not only has an enormous impact on individual and family health and wellbeing, but it also perpetuates system pressures on more costly interventions like hospitalisation," the letter, seen by The Australian, said.

"Governments committed through the current National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement ... to develop future arrangements for psychosocial supports after the analysis was completed. We are still waiting to see decisive government action to progress these arrangements, and the current agreement is due to expire by 30 June 2026. Action must be taken urgently to meet this outstanding commitment."

MHA urged for the next meeting of Commonwealth and state health ministers, scheduled next month, to consider a 50/50 funding deal to scale up investment in psychosocial supports over the next five years.

"A truly national response to unmet psychosocial support needs will require commitment from everyone – the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments must all come to the table in good faith to negotiate an outcome for the Australian community," MHA chief executive Carolyn Nikoloski said. "It is critical that all governments step up together at June's ministerial meeting to improve access to psychosocial supports. This will deliver immediate benefits to the community, it will also have flow on benefits across the health system, by alleviating pressures related to workforce shortages, emergency and ambulatory care, and unnecessary hospitalisation."

**THE AUSTRALIAN** News Corp Australia

Excerpt from: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/health/mental-health/mental-health-meeting-first-test-for-anthony-albanese/news-story/4fa4031b1fad0078e757c7d42ffa0ab8> | Reproduced under licence: NewsPix / News Corp Australia.



# Policy Submissions

**Mental Health Australia developed seven policy submissions, and four incoming parliamentary briefings in 2024–25, which provided tangible and practical policy recommendations to Government to advance national mental health reform.**

## ***Submission to National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1) Bill 2024 – July 2024***

Mental Health Australia made a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024. The submission built on our previous recommendations to prevent potential unintended consequences of the Bill, some of which were partially addressed.

## ***Submission to the consultation on draft lists of NDIS Supports – August 2024***

Mental Health Australia provided a submission to the Department of Social Services consultation on the draft lists of NDIS Supports. The submission drew on targeted member and stakeholder consultations, and made 10 recommendations to ensure psychosocial supports and other supports for people with psychosocial disability were adequately reflected in the list of NDIS supports.

The Australian Government has fully implemented 3, and partially implemented 4, of Mental Health Australia's recommendations regarding the National Disability Insurance Scheme Support Lists, ensuring psychosocial recovery supports are appropriately recognised.

## ***Submission on Reforms to Strengthen the National Mental Health Commission and National Suicide Prevention Office – October 2024***

Mental Health Australia made a submission to the National Suicide Prevention Office's consultation on their draft Advice on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy. The submission made recommendations to support implementation of the strategy and strengthen recognition of the role of the mental health system in suicide prevention.

## ***Submission on Reforms to Strengthen the National Mental Health Commission – November 2024***

Mental Health Australia submitted to the Department of Health and Aged Care's consultation on Reforms to Strengthen the National Mental Health Commission. Mental Health Australia made a number of considered recommendations to strengthen the Commission, including for its re-establishment as an independent, standalone statutory agency with enabling legislation.

## ***Submission to the Department of Social Services Consultation on General Foundational Supports – December 2024***

Mental Health Australia made a submission to the Department of Social Services consultation on General Foundational Supports. The submission recommended that information, advice, capacity building supports and referral services should be co-designed with people with lived experience and families, carers and kin, be well integrated with existing mental health information and referral services and include a positive outreach component.

Our submission also made a range of recommendations about how to ensure psychosocial specific services funded through General Foundational Supports are quality and safe and how to ensure a smooth transition across the implementation of Foundational Supports.

### ***Mental Health Australia's 2025-2026 Pre-Budget submission – January 2025***

Mental Health Australia submitted a 2025-26 Pre-Budget Submission in January, outlining recommendations to strengthen the foundations of our system, reform funding models and address support gaps in the upcoming Budget. The recommendations were based on those of national reviews and consultation with members including a workshop at the November 2024 Members Policy Forum.

### ***Submission to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement – March 2025***

Mental Health Australia contributed to the Productivity Commission review of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement through an initial consultation meeting with Commissioners and a formal written submission. Our submission acknowledges some progress made through the current National Agreement, and calls for far greater transparency, accountability and sector involvement in the next Agreement. Our submission reflects targeted engagement with members. In their interim report released in June, the Productivity Commission cited Mental Health Australia's work 35 times, demonstrating our influence and impact.



Image of Incoming Government Briefings cover pages

### ***Incoming Parliament Briefings***

Immediately following announcement of ministerial appointments, Mental Health Australia provided Minister Butler and Assistant Minister McBride our Incoming Government Brief outlining priorities for the first 100 days, first year and across the term of government. Acknowledging the range of ongoing reforms from the Albanese Government's first term, Mental Health Australia called for a National Mental Health Strategy to connect and prioritise these ongoing reform efforts and deliver transformative system change through this second term.

Mental Health Australia also developed a further separate disability portfolio briefing for Ministers Butler and McAllister on psychosocial disability and the NDIS, emphasising the need for an integrated system of support within and outside the NDIS.

In addition to Mental Health Australia's briefs for the incoming government on mental health and psychosocial disability, we provided briefings for the opposition and Australian Greens on national mental health and psychosocial disability priorities, outlining sector priorities and inviting continued collaboration to ensure progress on essential mental health and NDIS reform in this term of Parliament.

# Psychosocial Supports Advocacy

Mental Health Australia continued advocacy on improving access to psychosocial supports through our role as a member of the NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference group and subgroup on the design of a psychosocial early intervention service. In addition, we continued our advocacy through our role as a funded Disability Representative and Carer Organisation (including attending many consultations on the amendment to the NDIS Act) and have participated in a working group to design the navigator role, recommended by the NDIS Review. Mental Health Australia also participated in consultations on the design of Foundational Supports outside the NDIS and the movement of NDIS pricing to the Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority.

Mental Health Australia also established a Member Psychosocial Network to increase engagement with members on psychosocial policy issues, and create a platform to seek rapid input as required.

In December 2024, Mental Health Australia released a [\*\*Statement on Addressing Unmet Need for Psychosocial Support Outside the NDIS\*\*](#). We developed this Statement through consultation with our Member Psychosocial Network and consideration of key decision

points for government, to provide clear advice on the sector's expectations for the Australian Governments' next steps to address this significant unmet need. This Statement has informed ongoing consultation between the Australian Government and mental health sector on psychosocial supports.

## Federal Budget Overview

On 25 March we worked to provide our members with a comprehensive analysis of the 2025–2026 Budget on the same night it was released. While we welcomed measures in this Budget to provide cost of living relief including through increasing the Medicare levy low-income thresholds, targeted tax cuts and subsidised childcare measures, we called on the Government to work with the mental health sector to introduce specific measures to improve equity and affordability of access to mental health supports.

## National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network

Following proactive advocacy efforts, Mental Health Australia was invited by the Department of Health and Aged Care to establish and facilitate a Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network. The Sector Advisory Group and Network supports the interjurisdictional National Mental Health Workforce Working Group, which oversees implementation of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022–2032.

Since their establishment in May 2025, we have gathered initial input from the 32-member Advisory Group and 54-member Network to highlight sector priorities for the implementation of the Workforce Strategy, facilitated the first Advisory Group meeting on 3 June, and submitted the group's first advice to the Working Group. This project will continue to 30 June 2026.

# National Committee Representation

Throughout the year, Mental Health Australia maintained membership of several national committees and high-level advisory groups, including:

- National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement – Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Data Governance Forum
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Group – Safety and Quality Group
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority Mental Health Working Group Committee
- National Early Intervention Service Expert Advisory Group
- Strengthening Medicare Implementation Oversight Committee
- NDIS Disability Representative and Carer Organisation Forum
- NDIS Disability Representative and Carer Organisation – Navigator Co-design Working Group
- NDIS Quarterly Reform Forum
- NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference Group
- NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference Group – Psychosocial Early Intervention Service Working Group
- National Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Steering Group
- Equally Well Alliance

# Media and Communications

## Media engagement

Strategic media engagement remains a cornerstone of our advocacy efforts to drive national mental health policy reform. Throughout 2024–2025, Mental Health Australia maintained a strong media presence across online, print, and broadcast platforms—proactively shaping the national conversation, responding to media enquiries, and promoting responsible reporting on mental health system challenges. This work is critical to sustaining public and political momentum for practical policy solutions.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, we issued 11 media releases addressing key national mental health issues, resulting in 59 news mentions. Nearly half of these directly covered our pre-budget submission and election platform, reflecting strong alignment with our strategic priorities.

## Sector Communications

Mental Health Australia’s weekly CEO Update newsletter continues to be a valued communication channel for our members and stakeholders, reaching more than 5,000 subscribers each week.

Throughout the year, the newsletter provided policy leadership across the sector—highlighting emerging reform opportunities, addressing current issues, and sharing timely updates, resources, and insights from and for our members.

In 2024–2025, we published 47 editions of the CEO Update, reinforcing our commitment to transparent, consistent, and sector-wide engagement.

## ● STRATEGIC GOAL 2

# We unite and strengthen the mental health sector

### Goal:

We unite and strengthen the mental health sector.

### Initiatives:

Through our Shared Agenda for Change, we aim to align parts of the sector to deliver on shared outcomes – so that we can collectively have a greater impact.

We also have an active role in building the capacity and capability of the sector to meet the community's mental health needs, particularly through Embrace Multicultural Mental Health.

Mental Health Australia also facilitates opportunities for our members to come together to collaborate, share information and insights, and inform our work.

## Shared Agenda for Change

This year, we began developing our approach to delivering an important new initiative that will strengthen alignment across the mental health sector in pursuit of shared outcomes. This initiative, which we're calling the Shared Agenda for Change, presents a powerful opportunity for the sector to demonstrate leadership, unity, and a commitment to working together in new ways. It is described in our 2024–2029 strategy as:

“ We 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.” ”



A recent survey confirmed our members' strong commitment to collaborating more closely with Mental Health Australia and other sector organisations to address shared challenges. By aligning the sector's existing capacity and capabilities, we will demonstrate that by working together, we can achieve more than any one organisation could alone.

We will start small and build iteratively, tackling increasingly complex challenges and engaging more members and partners over time. We look forward to continuing this important work in partnership with our members and sector stakeholders, and to reporting on our progress in the year ahead.

## Building capacity and capability through Embrace Multicultural Mental Health



Group photo of Embrace Lived Experience Group, Embrace Team, Mental Health Australia team members, and Alliance Partner members.  
Source: photo taken at in-person meeting in 2025

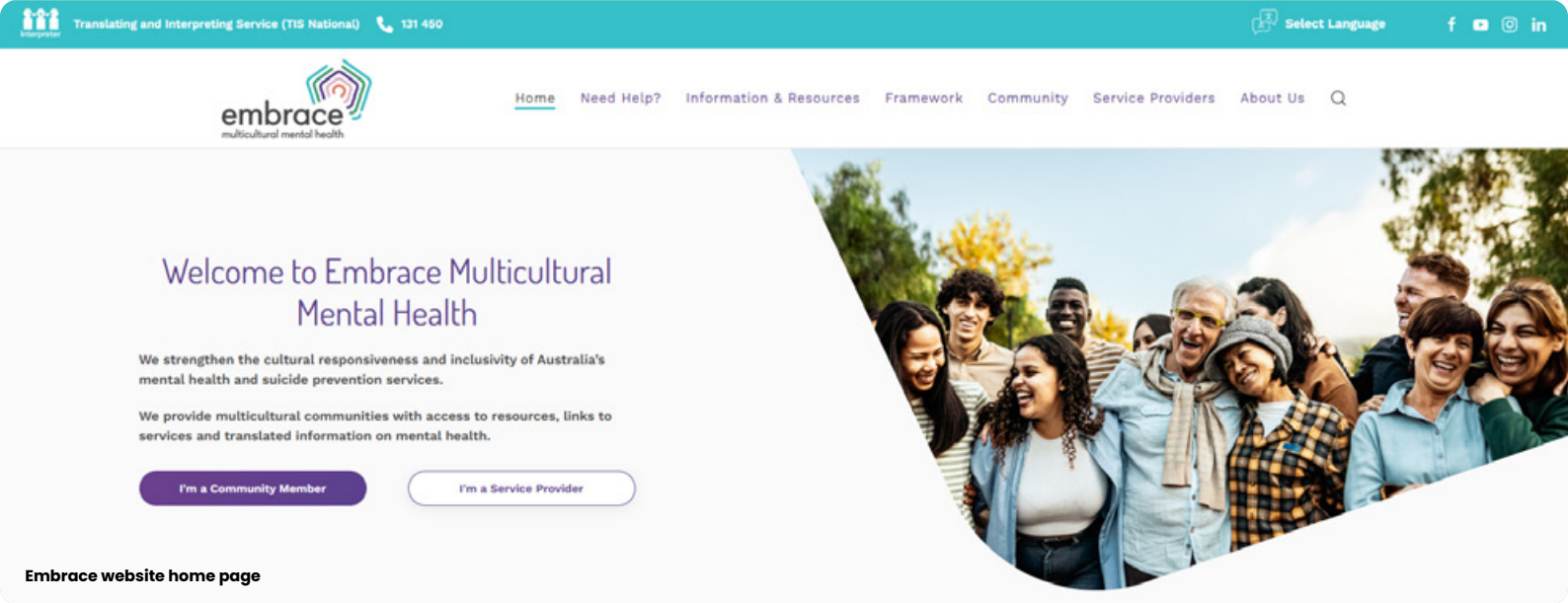
**Embrace Multicultural Mental Health (Embrace) provides a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Embrace is focused on working towards an equitable mental health system that reflects and responds well to the needs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

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

### *Embrace website, webinars and newsletter*

The Embrace website serves as a vital information hub, providing Australian mental health services and multicultural communities with 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 has attracted over 30,000 site visits this year alone. The quarterly Embrace e-newsletter, which features project updates, sector developments and partner news, is distributed to nearly 4,000 people.

We delivered two webinars this year: 'Delivering Safe, Quality and Culturally Responsive mental health services' and 'What is Cultural Responsiveness and why is it important for mental health care?'. These webinars collectively attracted over 1200 registrations from across Australia, highlighting strong sector-wide engagement and a commitment culturally safe and inclusive mental health and suicide prevention practices.



Embrace website home page

## The Embrace Framework

The Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (the Framework) is a free, nationally available online resource that 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 Framework was successfully transitioned to a Learning Management System this year, offering a more intuitive design, enhanced content accessibility, and a central resource library. As of 30 June 2025, the total number of users registered for the Framework was 2,903.

Sign up and access the Framework via our [website](#).



Various resources developed through the Embrace CALD Community Engagement Project

## CALD Community Engagement Project

The Embrace CALD Community Engagement Project (CCEP) commenced in 2021 to work alongside selected CALD communities, identifying mental health needs and collaboratively designing culturally relevant solutions and resources. In 2024–2025, the project engaged three organisations to co-design a range of resources with select multicultural communities. This included:

### The Congolese community in Albury, NSW, in partnership with the Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Association, NSW.

The resources developed by the African Congolese community in Albury–Wodonga focus on addressing stigma, misconceptions, language barriers when accessing mental health resources, awareness of care entitlements, service navigation challenges, and cultural responsiveness within services. They have co-designed a suite of resources that have been used in community awareness sessions.



Mental health awareness and support pocket-sized Guide in Arabic. This resource developed by multicultural communities in the ACT, in partnership with the Multicultural HUB, ACT



## Multicultural communities in the ACT, in partnership with the Multicultural HUB, ACT

Leaders from a diverse range of CALD Communities, supported by the Multicultural Hub (mHub) in Canberra, ACT, have developed mental health awareness and support resources in multiple languages. During consultations with CALD community leaders, consistent feedback from the group was about the limited awareness of services in the ACT and a lack of understanding of mental health conditions. To address this, the newly developed resources aim to increase mental health awareness in community and provide clear information about available services, both in person and online.

## The extension of the partnership between the Ezidi community in Armidale and STARTTS focussed on incorporating suicide prevention strategies.

The resources developed by the Ezidi community in Armidale are focused on addressing suicide prevention and strengthening community mental health literacy, aiming to improve mental health outcomes and build the community's capacity to support those affected by mental health challenges. Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma

Survivors (STARTTS) has co-designed a suite of initiatives to promote wellbeing, mental health, and social connection.

The Ezidi community initiatives include: a Shingal community garden, an Ezidi radio program, trauma-informed pottery workshops, an Ezidi music & choir group, suicide prevention training, culturally tailored merchandise and wellbeing ambassadors.



In partnership with the Ezidi community in Armidale, STARTTS has co-designed a suite of initiatives to promote wellbeing, mental health, and social connection. Source: Tile shared by STARTTS



Members of the Armidale Ezidi community taking part in a pottery class. Source: STARTTS, Embrace CCEP

Over the four years of the Project, completed this year, 11 multicultural communities participated through partnerships with community-based organisations, employing tailored engagement strategies to meet diverse community needs. Our partner organisations worked directly with communities through bicultural and bilingual workers to identify specific mental health needs and co-design culturally tailored solutions. Engagement methods were customised to honour each community's cultural practices, fostering safety and trust. A range of resources in multiple languages, including videos, written guides, podcasts, and community radio content, is available on the [Embrace website](#) for both the sector and community.

The evaluation with the Centre for Evidence and Innovation was finalised, which included the development of eight case studies across the project and a final report on the insights and findings. The report highlighted key enablers to the success of these projects, including:

- Partnering with local organisations and community or religious leaders to engage with the community, co-design solutions, and distribute resources.
- Leveraging the skills of bicultural workers to support community engagement and co-design.
- Adopting a flexible approach to community engagement and co-design to ensure a diverse range of community members were able to participate and stay involved.

Through this, a Community Engagement Toolkit is also being finalised, which demonstrates good practice community engagement, strengthens sector knowledge, and expands capacity for community-based mental health support. This Toolkit will be released in 2025–26.



## CULTIVATING CONNECTIONS: VISIT TO ARMIDALE COMMUNITY GARDEN



NSW Service for the  
Treatment and  
Rehabilitation of  
Torture and Trauma  
Survivors



In partnership with the Ezidi community in Armidale, STARTTS has co-designed a suite of initiatives to promote wellbeing, mental health, and social connection. | Source: Tile shared by STARTTS



## ***Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot***

Since 2023, we have delivered the Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot, which aims to strengthen the capacity of the suicide prevention sector to better support multicultural communities, while also building suicide prevention awareness within communities. This Pilot has been delivered in 2 phases; phase 1 was completed early 2024.

Phase 2 of the Pilot commenced this year and will continue to June 2026. Building on the learnings of Phase 1 and other information sources, this phase of the pilot aims to strengthen practice and increase sector and community capacity to better understand suicide in multicultural communities.

Activities undertaken during the year included reviewing and analysing Phase 1 learnings to inform how the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia could be more responsive to the needs of the suicide prevention sector. There was a strong focus on expanding our partnerships with suicide prevention services and engaging with communities and networks to raise awareness of Embrace in the context of suicide prevention.



Embrace staff and Embrace Lived Experience Group members engaged in a discussion | Source: photo taken at in-person meeting in 2025

We also conducted a comprehensive environmental scan to strengthen the evidence base that underpins the pilot, mapped existing initiatives and explored existing knowledge within the field. There was also a focus on exploring safe approaches to communicating about suicide in alignment with best practice principles.

## ***Multicultural Mental Health Research Project***

This year, through an open tender process, we engaged Western Sydney University as our research partner to deliver the Report on the State of Multicultural Australia. The research project will explore mental health outcomes for migrants and refugees, identify the best models of practice in responding to the mental health needs of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and seek to explore solutions that will address barriers. An Advisory Group, which includes people with lived experience, was established to guide the consultation aspects of the research project.

This report is a 10-year follow-up to the 2013 Mental Health in Multicultural Australia Report, led by Associate Professor Harry Minas for Embrace (formerly Mental Health in Multicultural Australia) and the National Mental Health Commission. It will be a critical informant for policy and service development, providing a suite of recommendations for government and the sector.



Embrace staff and Embrace Lived Experience Group members engaged in a discussion | Source: photo taken at in-person meeting in 2025





World Mental Health Day 2024 Calendars.

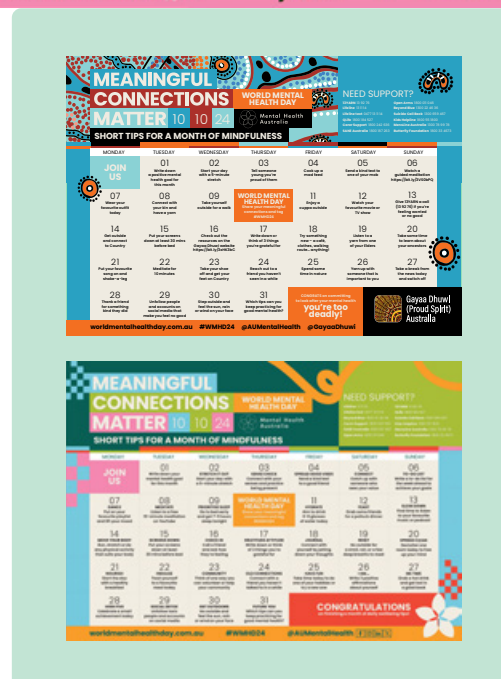
## World Mental Health Day Campaign

Mental Health Australia's 2024 World Mental Health Day campaign promoted the theme **Meaningful connections matter**, centring around stories from 12 lived experience advocates, as well as a highly popular t-shirt giveaway to promote conversations and digital resources. Throughout the campaign period, Mental Health Australia Facebook posts had a reach of 2.2 million people.

We partnered with four member organisations to collaborate on content, including Gayaa Dhuwi on a calendar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ReachOut and Orygen on a calendar for young people, and batyr for three of the lived experience stories.

Over 1800 organisations signed up to be partner in the campaign and download our digital resources package, and we had a further 5,400 people sign up to the campaign on top of 2023 numbers.

We commissioned Verian in November 2024 to conduct an independent evaluation of



the campaign through an online survey with 556 individual responders and 47 partner organisations, and a 90-minute focus group with 5 participants.

Participants that took part resonated with theme of 'Meaningful Connections Matter' and saw value in their involvement. Most partner organisations (91%) believed their participation in the campaign has helped their organisation.

# SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Mental Health Australia proactively brings the sector together to create opportunities for networking, collaboration and connection.

## Leadership Forum with Mental Health First Aid International

**On 22 August 2024, Mental Health Australia co-hosted a Leadership Forum with Mental Health First Aid, which brought together leaders, advocates, and professionals across the mental health sector to learn from our overseas counterparts about a whole-of-system approach to mental health care.**

We were honoured to have Chuck Ingoglia, President and CEO of the [National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#), as the keynote speaker. Chuck shared his insights from developing and scaling a community model of care in the U.S. – the [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics \(CCBHC\) program](#).

The panel discussion that followed Chuck's keynote touched on several key themes vital to the future of mental health care. Both the U.S. and Australia are grappling with similar challenges around mental health workforce supply and sustainability, as well as supporting the cultural change that is needed to move to more collaborative and transdisciplinary ways of working. Another prominent theme was the importance of working in partnership across sectors – such as with justice, education and housing. Mental health does not exist in a vacuum, and neither can the solutions.

## Parliamentary Mental Health Sector Expo

**On 9 October 2024, in the Mural Hall in Parliament House, Mental Health Australia held our inaugural Mental Health Sector Expo, hosted in partnership with the Parliamentary Friends Groups (Mental Health and Youth Mental Health) which showcased the mental health sector to parliamentarians and their staff, while facilitating meaningful networking opportunities across the sector.**

The event attracted 45 member organisations and over 120 people, and we were pleased to engage with at least 28 Members of Parliament, Senators and their teams. The event received positive feedback from both member organisations and parliamentarians.

Former Co-Chair, National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum, Jordan Frith, Mental Health Sector Expo, October 2024







The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Ageing and Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, addressing the audience, Members Policy Forum, June 2025



Members and guests at the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration

## 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 policy reform and collaborative action and advocacy.**

### November 2024

The November Members Policy Forum, Annual General Meeting and the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration were held at the State Library Victoria on 12 November 2024. With 119 attendees across 69 member organisations, this was our largest Members Policy Forum to date. Under the theme 'Driving Change', speakers and panellists included Martin Foley, Victoria's former Health and Mental Health Minister; Professor Bruce Bonyhady, Chair and Director of the Melbourne Disability Institute; Katie Larsen, Executive Director of Lived Experience at Mind Australia; and Professor Frank Oberklaid, Co-Group Leader of Child Health Policy, Equity and Translation at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.

“[I appreciated the...] opportunity to come together as a sector in person – seemed to be a great group of people. The panel discussions were great. The day was clearly really well organised and kept to time.” ”

### June 2025

Mental Health Australia's June 2025 Members Policy Forum attracted a record registration with over 130 people to attend in person and nearly 60 online. The event focused on our strategic and collective approach to mental health reform following the Federal Election outcome, with attendees hearing from the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon



Mark Butler MP; the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon. Emma McBride MP; the Productivity Commission, who shared insights on their interim report of the review of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement; as well as lived experience, sector and government leaders.

Attendees reported a high satisfaction rating of the event.



Attendees connecting, Members Policy Forum, June 2025

“Q. What did you like the most?”

“A. A great selection of speakers, the panel discussions were interesting... a very useful opportunity for networking, thinking collaboratively, and energising ongoing work.”

“A. Interesting mix of speakers with significant representation from govt and productivity commission.”

“A. Understanding policy mechanics.”

”



## 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration

**Mental Health Australia’s 18th Grace Groom Memorial Oration was delivered by Her Excellency the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. This event honours the late Grace Groom, former CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia (now Mental Health Australia).**

Ms Mostyn, a dedicated mental health advocate, in a deeply moving speech, emphasised the importance of care and kindness in improving our collective mental health. Ms Mostyn highlighted the critical role of belonging and connecting with our communities, as a pre-requisite for our mental health, and the mental wealth of Australia. Ms Mostyn’s words resonated with all present, reminding us of the important role and value of care as a lever for change in our society.

Many member representatives attending the November Members Policy Forum also attended the Oration and Dinner, which attracted 119 guests and the event received wonderful feedback.

Members and guests at the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration



“Q. What did you enjoy most?”

“A. Hearing the Governor General speak; the opportunity to meet new people.”

– Grace Groom Memorial Oration attendee.



Grace Groom's family (L-R) Heather Ewing, Zahrah Roush, the Governor General, Her Excellency, the Hon Ms Sam Mostyn AC, and Nicole and Nouri Groom at the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration



L-R: Our Interim Chair, Mark Orr AM, and CEO, Carolyn Nikoloski, and Justine Molony, with the Governor General, Her Excellency, the Hon Ms Sam Mostyn AC at the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration

2024 Grace Groom Scholarship recipient, Ayenew Tesema, accepting his award via video at the 2024 Grace Groom Memorial Oration.

## Grace Groom Scholarship

The Grace Groom Memorial Scholarship was established in memory of our former CEO, the late Grace Groom. The purpose of the Scholarship is to provide financial support to international or domestic postgraduate students enrolled in study and research relating to mental health issues.

The 2024 Grace Groom Scholarship was awarded to Mr Ayenew Tesema, whose research focus was Perinatal Mental Health and Mental Health Literacy in Ethiopia.





# Webinars

**Mental Health Australia hosts webinars that facilitate sector-wide engagement, share updates on national priorities, and gather insights to inform ongoing policy development.**

## 12 July 2024 – NAIDOC

In recognition of NAIDOC Week, Mental Health Australia invited members to a webinar with the CEO of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, Rachel Fishlock.

NAIDOC Week (National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observance Committee) occurs annually in July, and celebrates the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The 2024 theme was 'Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud' and celebrated the unyielding spirit of First Nations communities and invited all to stand in solidarity, amplifying the voices that have long been silenced.

Mental Health Australia is committed to honouring and celebrating the strengths and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights.

## 17 July 2024 – National Mental Health Commission – National Report Card 2023

Mental Health Australia hosted a webinar with the then Interim Chief Executive Officer of the National Mental Health Commission, Paul McCormack, to discuss its National Report Card 2023.

The National Mental Health Commission's National Report Card 2023 provided a 'refreshed approach' to annual reporting on Australia's mental health system, drawing together data across a set of core indicators to reflect on system outcomes and performance in the 2023 calendar year.

## 7 August 2024 – Strategy Launch & Special General Meeting

Seventy member representatives joined us online as we launched our next [5-year strategy](#) – marking a pivotal moment in Mental Health Australia's journey.

This event also included a Special General Meeting where members voted on a special resolution and approved recommended changes to the Mental Health Australia Limited Constitution.

## 13 August 2024 – Dr Peggy Brown AO, Former Commissioner, Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

In partnership with Suicide Prevention Australia, Mental Health Australia hosted a webinar to promote the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's recent publication of its book to honour the contribution of people with lived experience of military suicide to the landmark inquiry. In this presentation, former Commissioner Dr Peggy Brown took members through some of the topics canvassed in the book and explored the significant challenges confronting past and present Defence personnel on a daily basis.

## 3 February 2025 – Psychosocial Network

Alongside the release of the [Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial supports outside the NDIS](#), in August 2024, Health and Mental Health Ministers committed to develop a robust plan for future psychosocial support arrangements ('psychosocial plan'). In February 2025, Mental Health Australia worked with the then Department of Health and Aged Care to deliver a consultation webinar with Mental Health Australia members to inform the development of the psychosocial plan.

## 17 February 2025 – Child and Youth Consultation

Mental Health Australia hosted a member webinar focused on mental health in children and young people, to inform the development of our Federal Election Platform.

# HOW WE WORK



The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Ageing, meeting ReachOut representatives, Mental Health Sector Expo, October 2024



**People with lived and living experience of mental health challenges, family, carers and kin, along with our members, are at the centre of everything we do.**

## Lived Experience Participation and Partnership

Since 2002, Mental Health Australia has auspiced the National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) and, since 2007, led the National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives (National Register) project. This year marked a pivotal moment for people with lived experience of mental health challenges – as well as their family, carers, and kin – with two national lived experience peak bodies – the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance and Mental Health Carers Australia – now operational, following decades of dedicated advocacy.

These changes heralded a year of transition for members of the NMHCCF and National Register, with both groups closing on 30 June 2025. A key focus was on supporting the NMHCCF and National Register to bring their work to a close, and to celebrate their significant contributions to lived experience leadership and national policy reform.

### National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum

The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum (NMHCCF) continued to be a combined national voice for mental health consumers and carers, driving sector reform and contributing to mental health policy in Australia until its closure. Mental Health Australia is honoured to have walked alongside the Forum throughout its journey, providing Secretariat services, project and policy support. It has been our privilege to witness the legacy of courage, commitment and collaboration that the NMHCCF leaves behind as we enter a new period of lived experience leadership.

The NMHCCF was comprised of one consumer and one carer representative nominated by each state and territory, and consumer and carer representatives from each of the following national projects/organisations:

- blueVoices, the consumer and carer reference group for Beyond Blue
- Carers Australia
- Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- Grow Australia
- Mental Health Carers Australia
- Lived Experience Australia
- Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Lived Experience Group

NMHCCF members and Mental Health Australia lived experience team staff at the NMHCCF's final face to face meeting, May 2025



NMHCCF members represented mental health consumers and carers on a large number of national bodies, including government committees and advisory groups, professional bodies and other consultative forums and events.

The NMHCCF Executive worked closely with Mental Health Australia to provide a smooth transition and closure process. The NMHCCF met online four times and held its final in person meeting on 6 May 2025. The NMHCCF also operated five working groups that meet regularly to progress the Forum's core business. Groups active this year were:

- Advocacy Working Group
- Consumer and Carer Leadership Working Group
- Peer Workforce Working Group
- Psychosocial Disability Working Group
- Change Management Working Group

**The NMHCCF and its working groups produced significant submissions, position statements, advocacy briefs, events, and projects during 2024/25. This included:**

### Submissions

- Submission to the Department of Social Services NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce Consultation
- Submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee's Inquiry into the Getting the NDIS Back on Track Bill
- Submission to the Consultation on Draft Lists of NDIS Supports
- Submission on Developing the National Carer Strategy
- Submission to Draft Advice on the National Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Submission to the Draft National Carer Strategy
- Submission on Reforms to Strengthen the National Mental Health Commission and National Suicide Prevention Office
- Submission on Foundational Supports
- Submission to the Productivity Commission on the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy

All NMHCCF Submissions can be found here:

### [Submissions](#)

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

### Position Statements

- Letter to Senators: Voting 'No' on the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024
- We Call for a Mental Health System that Puts Human Rights First
- NMHCCF Summary of Final Key Priorities

All NMHCCF Position Statements can be found here: [Position Statements](#)

### Advocacy Briefs

- Sexual Safety of Consumers in Mental Health Inpatient Units
- The Peer Workforce (updated)

All NMHCCF Advocacy Briefs can be found here: [Advocacy Briefs](#)

### Additional Projects

- Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Checklist – produced in partnership with Lived Experience Australia
- Outcome Report and Infographic on 'Lived Experience Leading the Way': National Psychosocial Disability Roundtable
- NMHCCF Lived Experience Theory of Change
- NMHCCF & National Register Historical Document: 'Stronger Together'.

### Webinars

The NMHCCF hosted six webinars during the reporting period, on the following topics:

- 1 October 2024 – The Ageing Population, Mental Health, Human Rights and the Lived Experience Workforce (53 attendees)

- 30 October 2024 – Sexual Safety of Consumers in Mental Health Inpatient Units (117 attendees)
- 4 December 2024 – Peer Workforce Readiness Checklist (103 attendees)
- 24 February 2025 – Trauma or Treatment (130 attendees)
- 4 June 2025 – NMHCCF Lived Experience Theory of Change (101 attendees)
- 11 June 2025 – ‘Psychosocial Disability’ and ‘Complex Mental Health’: A Co-Design Perspective (181 attendees)

Webinar Recordings can be found at:  
[Webinars](#)

### Psychosocial Disability

The NMHCCF continued providing lived experience expertise at meetings, consultations, and events as part of the Disability Representative and Carer Organisation (DRCO) program. This included:

- Quarterly DRCO Forums.
- Quarterly NDIA Reform Forums.
- Assessments & Budgeting and Navigator Co-Design Working Groups of the NDIA Co-Design Program.
- DRCO Secretariat’s Employment Working Group.
- Multiple legislative reform consultations with Minister Shorten and senior NDIA officials, prior and subsequent to the passage of the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024.
- Successfully transitioning from the Reform for Outcomes program representation to NDIA Co-Design representation.

Psychosocial disability advocacy outside of the above programs:

- Australia Federation of Disability Organisation Member Forums, Policy Networks, and ad hoc meetings.
- Attending ongoing disability sector policy network meetings, members’ forums, and organisational conferences to inform national policy submissions.

## National Register

**The National Register of Mental Health Consumer and Carer Representatives consisted of a pool of trained mental health consumer and carer representatives from across Australia, who worked at the national level to provide a strong consumer and carer voice in the mental health sector.**

Members of the National Register utilised their lived experience, knowledge of the mental health system, and communication skills to advocate for and promote the issues and concerns of mental health consumers and carers.

This was a year of transition, as the National Register prepared for the changes in lived experience representation arrangements. The key focus of the group during 2024–2025 was to partner with the NMHCCF and Mental Health Australia Secretariat team to plan the final Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop to celebrate the group’s successes and contributions over its 17 years of operation.

### Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop

In May 2025, we gathered for the final 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. Over two days, 57 consumer and carer representatives came together under the theme ‘Celebrating our Past and Building Our Future.’ The primary goal of the workshop was to celebrate the achievements and camaraderie of the NMHCCF and the National Register. The workshop also focused on capacity building and professional development to support members in securing future lived experience representative opportunities.





One of the most powerful moments of the workshop came from motivational speaker and speed painter Rowan. Through her words on mental health and resilience, and the live creation of an artwork inspired by the courage and tenacity of members of the NMHCCF and National Register, Rowan captured the spirit of strength, hope and determination that defines these groups.



Unique artwork created by artist Rowan for the NMHCCF and National Register at the 2025 Annual Issues and Opportunities Workshop

Mental Health Australia extends our heartfelt thanks to all members of the NMHCCF and the National Register. We are grateful for your unwavering commitment to driving system and policy reform and ensuring the voice and expertise of people with lived experience remains central to mental health reform across the nation.

### ***Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Representation***

Mental Health Australia continues to maintain the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Group (LEG). This supports the inclusion of the perspectives of people with lived experience of mental health challenges and/or suicide and their families, carers and kin, across the MHSPSO Group and its working groups to inform the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (the National Agreement).

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

This year, the MHSPSO LEG met on three occasions, including an in-person meeting conducted in Canberra in March 2025. These meetings enabled the LEG to provide input into the Australian Productivity Commission's inquiry into the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, as well as other activities within the Department's remit.

Members of the LEG also provided feedback about their experience of MHSPSO to inform the Annual National Progress Report for the 2023–24 year. A selection of the LEG group are representatives on the MHSPSO working groups, whose Secretariat reports that the input of the lived experience representatives is invaluable in progressing key objectives.

# OUR PEOPLE

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Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski with Addie Wootten from Smiling Mind

# MEMBERSHIP

Mental Health Australia membership has grown steadily over the last financial year and currently includes over 150 members, including service providers, professional bodies, organisations representing people with mental health challenges, their family, carers and kin, researchers, and national, state and territory mental health peak bodies.

## Member organisations as of 30 June 2025

### Full Members

ALIVE National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation
Arafmi
Australasian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies (ACPP)
Australian Association of Social Workers
Australian BPD Foundation
Australian Clinical Psychology Association
Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
Australian Counselling Association
Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation
Australian Music Therapy Association
Australian Psychological Society
Australian Rotary Health
Australian Society for Psychological Medicine
Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC)
Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association (ANZACATA)

Batyr Australia
Being - Mental Health Consumers
Beyond Blue
Bipolar Australia
Black Dog Institute
Blue Knot Foundation
Brain Mind Centre
Butterfly Foundation
Carers Australia
Catholic Social Services Australia
Centre for Mental Health Research (ANU)
Community Mental Health Australia
Consumers of Mental Health WA (CoMHWa)
Dementia Australia
Dietitians Australia
Eating Disorders Families Australia
Emerging Minds
Everymind*
Flourish Australia
Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia*
Gidget Foundation Australia
Grief Australia*
Griefline
GROW
Hand n Hand*
Headspace
Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA)
Inside out & associates Australia*
Institute of Clinical Psychologists (ICP)
LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
Lifeline Australia
Liptember Foundation
Lived Experience Australia



Manna institute*
Meaningful Ageing Australia
Mental Health Australia General Clinical Trial Network (MAGNET)
Mental Health Carers Australia
Mental Health Coalition of SA
Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
Mental Health Coordinating Council NSW
Mental Health Council of Tasmania
Mental Health First Aid Australia
Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland (MHLEPQ)
Mental Health Policy Unit (MHPU)
Mental Health Professionals Network
Mental Health Victoria
Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
Mind Australia
Mindgardens Neuroscience Research Australia
MindSpot*
National Eating Disorders Collaboration*
National Mental Health Consumer Alliance
National Rural Health Alliance
Neami National
NT Mental Health Coalition
Occupational Therapy Australia
Orygen
Ostara Australia Limited
Parent - Infant Research Institute (PIRI)
Prevention United*
Psychosis Australia Trust
Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)
Psychology for a Safe Climate*
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health

Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research
R U OK? Foundation
Relationships Australia
Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
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 MHS Learning Network Inc
Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC)
WA Association for Mental Health
Wellways
Youturn Youth Support

\*Member joined in 2024-2025 Financial Year



## Associate members

ACT Mental Health Consumer Network
Allied Health Professions Australia
Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria
Breakthru
Brisbane North PHN
Carers ACT
CatholicCare NT
CatholicCare Victoria
Centre for Muslim Wellbeing
CoHealth
Communify
Connections Inc
Converge International
Eating Disorders Queensland
Ending Loneliness Together
Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)
Focused Mental Education*
FearLess Outreach
Helping Minds
Innowell
JUNO Services
KidsXpress
Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network (LELAN)
Marathon Health
Mental Health Lived Experience Tasmania (MHLET)

Mental Health Partners
Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT)
Mentally Healthy WA
Mentis Assist
Micah Projects
Mind Medicine Australia
Movember Foundation
Occupational Therapy Society for Invisible Disabilities (OTSI)*
Open Minds
One Door Mental Health
Opengate Institute
Pathways SouthWest Inc
Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA)
PHN Cooperative
Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Primary & Community Care Services
Relationships Australia Victoria
Ruah Community Services
Skylight Mental Health
Sonder*
Tandem
TeamHEALTH
Tully Support Centre
WayAhead - Mental Health Association NSW

\*Member joined in 2024-2025 Financial Year

# OUR PEOPLE

## Our Board

**Mental Health Australia is governed by a Board of up to 10 Directors. In August 2024 the Constitution was amended by special resolution resulting in the composition of the Board changing from up to 8 Elected Directors and up to 2 Board Appointed Directors to now being up to 7 Elected Directors and up to 3 Appointed Directors.**

### *Board Directors 2024–2025*

#### **Dr Peggy Brown AO**

Board Appointed Chair and Director  
January 2025 – present

#### **Mark Orr AM**

Interim Chair  
April 2024 – January 2025  
Deputy Chair January 2025 – present  
Governance Committee Chair  
Elected Director  
November 2020 – November 2024  
Board Appointed Director  
November 2024 – present

#### **Katrina Armstrong**

Elected Director  
November 2024 – present

#### **Dr Catherine Andronis**

Elected Director  
December 2020 – November 2024

#### **Nicola Ballenden**

Elected Director  
January 2023 – present

#### **Tamara Cavenett**

Elected Director  
November 2022 – November 2025

#### **Rachel Fishlock**

Elected Director  
November 2024 – present

#### **Prof Sharon Lawn**

Elected Director  
December 2021 – present

#### **Marie Piu**

Elected Director  
November 2022 – November 2024

#### **Dr Sara Quinn**

Elected Director  
November 2024 – present

#### **Helen Rowell**

Board Appointed Director  
April 2024 – present

#### **Dr Evelyne Tadros**

Elected Director  
November 2023 – present

#### **Assoc Prof Melanie Turner**

FARM Committee Chair  
Elected Director  
November 2023 – present

### *FARM Committee External Members 2024–2025*

Mental Health Australia has two external members of the Finance and Risk Management Committee (FARM) who provide pro-bono contributions as Committee members.

#### **Dean Boland**

Appointed February 2019 – present

#### **Ken Maxwell**

Appointed February 2019 – February 2025

#### **Georgina Crundell**

Appointed June 2025 – present



Mental Health Australia Team with the Governor-General, Her Excellency, the Honourable Ms Sam Mostyn AC

# Our Team

**Mental Health Australia’s success depends on the experience and dedication of our staff. Our team combines extensive skills in policy, government relations, business, governance, program development, multicultural mental health, management, planning, communications, event management and administration. Staff as of 30 June 2025 were:**

Name	Position
Amy Byrne	People and Culture Manager
Bao Ngo	Finance Officer
Breanna Bolijkovac	Membership and Governance Officer
Carolyn Nikoloski	Chief Executive Officer
Crystal Paniccia	Embrace – Senior Program Manager
Danica Browne	Manager Lived Experience Programs
Ebenezer Swan	Senior Policy and Projects Officer – Lived Experience
Emma Coughlan	Senior Policy and Projects Officer
Emma Greeney	Director of Policy and Advocacy
Ingrid Hatfield	Deputy Director Policy and Advocacy
Kathryn Sequoia	Director of Membership, Governance & Company Secretary

Name	Position
Kelli Cooper-Durant	Communications Officer
Kelsey Hilder	Executive Assistant
Matthew Potts	Senior Project Officer – Embrace
Michelle Possingham	Director of Programs and Sector Development
Nikki Hogan	Senior Events & Website Manager
Odette Fuller	Team Support Officer
Renata Anderson	Senior Policy and Project Officer
Ruth Das	Embrace – Engagement & Partnerships Lead
Samantha Lilley	Embrace Project Officer
Simon Ash	Director Corporate Services
Urooj Hanafi	Embrace Project Officer
Wendy Anderson	Senior Project Officer – Lived Experience

## Workforce diversity and inclusion

**Workplace 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 2025/26. 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 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 undertaken by employees.

## Strengthening our culture and capability

Mental Health Australia has recently launched a comprehensive People and Culture Strategy designed to embed our organisational values – curiosity, courage and connection – and to foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture, enhance our ways of working, and strategically build our workforce capacity and capability.

As part of our initiatives for the 2024–25 financial year, we have launched regular pulse staff engagement surveys to support the ongoing implementation of our People and Culture Strategy. Our pulse survey results show that our team is engaged, we live our values every day, and all team members can see how their work contributes to our success and impact.





# THANK YOU

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Mental Health Australia extends its heartfelt thanks to our members, stakeholders, and the broader mental health sector for their unwavering support, collaboration, and commitment throughout 2024–2025. We deeply value the extraordinary efforts across the sector—whether in providing mental health supports and services, advancing research, delivering programs or progressing advocacy efforts.

We especially acknowledge and honour those with lived experience of mental health challenges, along with their families, carers, and kin, whose courage and advocacy continue to drive meaningful reform. We also thank the policymakers and governments we work alongside. It is this shared expertise, passion, and unity that will enable us to build a mentally healthy future for every person in Australia.

