



Mental Health
Australia
Media release

80 mental health organisations call for bold action

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Mental Health Australia has been joined by 80 mental health organisations across the country calling for Health and Mental Health Ministers to take serious action at the Ministers' meeting on 16 August.

In a joint Statement of Priorities released today, the mental health sector has outlined priority actions and next steps for Australian, State and Territory Governments to implement immediately to improve access to mental health supports.

This includes action to:

1. Publicly release the national Analysis of Unmet Need for Psychosocial Support outside the NDIS, and recommend to National Cabinet a co-funding agreement to fully address unmet need for psychosocial support
2. Commit to ongoing twice-yearly mental health minister meetings
3. Commit to a national accord to co-fund a system of mental health supports bridging primary and acute care

The Statement further outlines agreed actions across priority areas including system reform and integration, workforce development, and infant, child and youth services.

“This is the first national meeting of Health and Mental Health Ministers in years, and comes at a time when the rate of young people experiencing mental health conditions has increased by an alarming 50 per cent over recent years. Mental health conditions and substance use disorders are also now the leading cause of poor health in Australia,” says Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski.

“Collective action from governments is needed to address this trend, increasing both preventive efforts and access to mental health treatment and supports.”



There is a huge gap in mental health supports in the community, including at least 154,000 people missing out on the psychosocial supports they need. This puts pressure on primary and acute care – where mental health issues are now the most common health issue managed by GPs, and people presenting to Emergency Departments with mental health needs routinely wait longer and experience longer treatment periods than people with other urgent health challenges.

“Government investment in the mental health system is simply not matching the level of need evident in our community,” says Ms Nikoloski.

“Governments spend only 7 per cent of total health expenditure on mental health (down from 8 percent in 2019-20). Further, there is a 32 per cent shortfall across the mental health workforce, anticipated to grow to 42 per cent by 2030 without action.”

Together with 80 statement signatories, Mental Health Australia is calling on Health and Mental Health Ministers to make the most of this unique opportunity to commit to a bold new agreement making real change for people needing mental health support.

“Governments have the opportunity to deliver a new collaborative approach to mental health that provides better outcomes for people, families and communities and more efficient use of health resources,” Ms Nikoloski says.

“The Statement of Priorities demonstrates the level of agreement across the mental health sector on the next steps needed from Australian governments to improve mental health. The Statement is endorsed by mental health lived experience and carer representative peak bodies, all mental health state and territory peak bodies, leading clinical professional bodies, research organisations and service providers across the spectrum of care.”

ENDS

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

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

Quotes are attributable.

Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski is available for interviews.

Media Contact: Senior Communications Manager Lisa Clarke 0421 072 046

