Mental Health Australia

Annual Report 2025–26



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.

Contents

About us 4

Chair's Welcome 5

CEO's Welcome 7

Strategic Goal 1 9

Strategic Goal 2 17

How we work 31

Our People 32

Thank you 43



About us

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

We bring together 160 member organisations including service providers, organisations representing people with lived experience, their families, carers and kin, professional bodies, researchers and state and territory peaks.

As the national peak body 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. Our work helps to improve both 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.

Our work is underpinned by the views and expertise of people with lived experience of mental health challenges, their families, carers and kin, along with our member organisations.

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 any of us could achieve working alone.





Some of the Mental Health Australia staff at the May Members' Policy Forum in Canberra (top).

Mental Health Australia members listening to the Minister at the Sector Expo in March 2026 (bottom).

Chair's Welcome

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of Mental Health Australia during a period of significant challenge, change and opportunity for Australia's mental health system.

We are living in a world that feels especially heavy at the moment. Across Australia, people are feeling the impact of rising living costs, housing pressures, natural disasters, increasing violence, racism and discrimination, and global conflict and instability. These pressures affect our sense of connection and belonging, place strain on families and communities, and take a toll on mental health and wellbeing.

For many people, particularly those already experiencing disadvantage, these challenges make it harder to access the care and assistance they need. At the same time, more Australians are experiencing mental health challenges and demand for mental health services continues to grow, highlighting the need for a system that is responsive, sustainable and capable of meeting people where they are.

These challenges cannot be addressed through short-term or isolated responses. They require long-term commitment, coordinated action and a shared determination to create meaningful reform. More than ever, this is a time for governments, services, communities and people with lived and living experience and their families, carers and kin to work together to improve Australia's mental health system.

Having worked in mental health for many years, I know how complex these challenges can be. Reform takes time, and progress is not always straightforward. Yet I remain optimistic. Throughout my career I have seen what can be achieved when people come together with a shared purpose.

Mental Health Australia's members play a critical role in this work. Our strength lies in bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives from across the mental health sector. By working collectively, we can identify priorities, elevate community voices and advocate for practical solutions that improve people's lives.



Left to right: Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention The Hon. Emma McBride MP, Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski, Minister for Health, Ageing, Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme The Hon. Mark Butler MP, Mental Health Australia Chair Dr Peggy Brown AO.

A key focus of Mental Health Australia's advocacy during 2025-26 has been influencing the development of the next National Agreement. This Agreement represents a significant opportunity to shape mental health reform in the years ahead. It will help determine how governments work together, how responsibilities are shared across jurisdictions, and how people experience the mental health system across Australia.

Getting these foundations right is critical. The next Agreement must support a system that is person-centred, connected and accountable, while improving access to the services and supports people need throughout their lives. Mental Health Australia has worked closely with governments, members and people with lived and living experience, their families, carers and kin to help ensure this opportunity delivers meaningful and lasting change.

Alongside this work, we have continued to advocate on other important reform priorities. This has included influencing reforms to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and advocating for improved supports for people with psychosocial disability, both within and beyond the NDIS. We know many people continue to miss out on the psychosocial supports they need, and addressing these gaps remains essential to achieving better outcomes.

We have also worked closely with government on the implementation of the Australian Government's existing mental health commitments, including initiatives designed to expand access to early intervention supports, strengthen the mental health workforce, and improve mental health data. These opportunities have the potential to make a meaningful difference, but ongoing partnership across government and the sector will be essential to ensure they deliver real change.

At the same time, Mental Health Australia has continued to highlight the pressures facing the mental health sector. Rising costs, workforce shortages and growing demand are creating significant challenges for organisations across the country. Supporting a sustainable sector is fundamental to ensuring Australians can continue to access high-quality mental health care and support.

Underlying all this work are the strong and respectful relationships that make progress possible. Mental Health Australia's advocacy is strengthened by our partnerships with governments, member organisations, and people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges, their families, carers and kin. These relationships help ensure policy solutions are informed by evidence, experience and a shared commitment to better outcomes.

As we look ahead, our collective strength has never mattered more. The challenges facing our communities are significant, but so too is our capacity to respond when we work together. By working together, we can build a mental health system that better supports people to live well, participate fully and feel hopeful about their future.

My sincere thanks to my fellow Board Directors, Mental Health Australia's members, and the dedicated staff whose expertise, commitment and passion drive this work every day. Together, we will continue to advocate for the reform Australians need and deserve, and work towards our vision of mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities.

Dr Peggy Brown AO
Chair, Mental Health Australia



CEO's Welcome

This year has been one of advocacy, collaboration and action for Mental Health Australia. Guided by our vision of mentally healthy people, mentally healthy communities, our Board and team worked alongside our members, governments, people with lived experience, their family, carers and kin, and partners across the sector to progress meaningful reform and strengthen Australia's mental health system.

Our Strategy 2024–2029 continued to guide this work through two clear goals: driving better mental health policies and systems, and uniting and strengthening the mental health sector.

Policy and advocacy remained central to our work throughout the year. Following the Federal Election in May and ahead of negotiations for the next National Agreement, we focused on influencing the policies, systems and supports that will shape the future of mental health care and support.

Across the year, we developed six policy submissions and two position statements; strengthened collective advocacy through shared positions on unmet psychosocial support needs and priorities for the next National Agreement; and facilitated five meetings of the Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and three additional mental health workforce sector consultations. We also engaged with Health and Mental Health Ministers ahead of their February 2026 meeting and brought the sector together to inform the National Mental Health Commission on strengthening national reporting for mental health services delivered by non-government organisations.

This year, we also continued to engage members and stakeholders through our events and consultations. Highlights included well-attended Member Policy Forums in Melbourne and Canberra, and our second Mental Health Sector Expo at Parliament House in March, attended by more than 160 participants from 56 organisations. In addition, we hosted five national webinars focused on psychosocial supports, mental health data and reporting, Federal Budget priorities and national reform activity.

Mental Health Australia continued our national leadership in multicultural mental health and suicide prevention through the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health program, which strengthens the capability of mainstream mental health organisations to better understand and respond to the needs of people from multicultural communities. The Embrace website attracted more than 40,000 visits, providing access to the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia, translated resources and culturally responsive information.

A significant achievement was the launch of the State of Multicultural Mental Health Report, commissioned through Western Sydney University, which provides a national snapshot of multicultural mental health to inform more effective policy and service responses.

The leadership and participation of people with lived experience, their family, carers and kin continued to be central to our work. During the year, we supported the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Lived Experience Group in its role supporting implementation of the National Agreement. The Group concluded on 30 June 2026 as responsibility transitioned to the lived experience peak bodies. Throughout this period, we worked closely with stakeholders to support continuity of lived experience participation and leadership in national reform discussions and future governance arrangements.

Our World Mental Health Day campaign – Connect With Your Community – in October helped unite the sector and highlight the benefits of connection and community for our mental health. The campaign featured Mental Health Calendars with wellbeing tips and other digital resources and secured over 100,000 website views and strong evaluation results.

Strong governance and Board leadership continued to support Mental Health Australia's strategic priorities throughout the year. We acknowledge the ongoing contribution of Chair Dr Peggy Brown AO and Deputy Chair Mark Orr AM, whose leadership helped guide the organisation through a period of significant policy and reform activity. During the year, we welcomed newly elected Directors Ellie Hodges and Geoffrey Radford following the Annual General Meeting in November 2025. We also extend our sincere thanks to Prof Sharon Lawn, Dr Evelyne Tadros and Assoc Prof Melanie Turner, whose Board terms concluded during the year, for their dedicated service, expertise and valued contributions to Mental Health Australia and the broader mental health sector.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, I am reminded that meaningful reform can only be achieved through collaboration. Every policy submission, campaign, consultation, event and partnership described in this report reflects the contribution of our members, partners, governments, people with lived experience, their family, carers and kin, and the broader mental health sector.

I extend my sincere thanks to our members, Board, partners and the Mental Health Australia team for their continued commitment, expertise and leadership. We could not achieve this work without you.

While significant challenges remain, there is reason for optimism. Throughout the year we have seen change happen when we come together around a shared commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing.

As we look ahead, Mental Health Australia remains committed to working with the community, our members and governments to drive reform and build a mentally healthy future for every person and community.

Carolyn Nikoloski
Chief Executive Officer
Mental Health Australia



Strategic Goal ①

We drive better mental health policies and systems

Advocacy for the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement

In consultation with members, Mental Health Australia developed three statements to inform governments' consideration of priorities for the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (National Agreement). The statements were provided to government in June and publicly released in July 2026.

The three statements included:

1) **Priorities Statement** – which sets out clear and practical actions governments can take to improve mental health outcomes through targeted investment in priority reform areas, addressing weaknesses in system foundations and strengthening existing commitments.

2) **Fundamental Principles for Psychosocial Supports** – which highlights psychosocial support for people with mental health challenges who fall outside the NDIS as a critical missing piece of Australia's mental health system, and guides governments' response to unmet psychosocial supports needs.

3) **Workforce priorities** – which outlines the urgent need to address workforce shortages, recruitment and retention challenges, and long-term workforce planning, and was developed in consultation with the National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network.

Mental Health Australia also worked with the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to facilitate a consultation on the National Agreement at our May Members' Policy Forum, providing an opportunity for members to advise government directly on their priorities.

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 practical policy solutions, and advocate for system reforms that improve mental health and enable the mental health sector to thrive.





Image of the Sector Priorities Statement (top) and Fundamental Principles for Psychosocial Supports outside the NDIS (bottom)

Policy submissions and publications

In consultation with our members and key stakeholders, Mental Health Australia regularly informs Commonwealth Government policy development processes. Mental Health Australia developed six policy submissions and one position statement in addition to our National Agreement advocacy during 2025–2026, which provided tangible and practical policy recommendations to Government.

SUBMISSION TO PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL AGREEMENT – JULY 2025

Mental Health Australia provided a submission to the Productivity Commission's review of the National Agreement, in response to the interim report. The submission was informed by a consultation workshop and survey with members at our June Member Policy Forum, as well as further key stakeholder meetings.

Our submission strongly supported the majority of the Commission's draft recommendations, however raised concerns regarding their proposed extension of the current Agreement, as this would risk further delaying urgent actions including addressing unmet need for psychosocial support. It offered ten specific recommendations for consideration for the final report. Mental Health Australia also attended a public hearing for the review on 20 August 2025. Mental Health Australia's submission was cited 70 times in the Commission's Final Report, and 50% of our recommendations were partially adopted by the Commission.

RENEWED STATEMENT ON ADDRESSING UNMET NEED FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) – OCTOBER 2025

Informed by consultation with our Members' Psychosocial Network, Mental Health Australia released a Renewed Statement on Addressing Unmet Need for Psychosocial Support Outside the NDIS. The statement called for the Australian Government to establish a temporary psychosocial uplift fund through the 2025 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook process, with matched funding from state and territory governments to support an initial expansion of services. It also recommended that all governments commit through the next National Agreement to a detailed plan to fully address unmet need for psychosocial support by 2030.

SUBMISSION TO THE ECONOMIC INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 2025

Mental Health Australia was one of a limited number of organisations invited to contribute to the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee's advice ahead of the 2026-27 Budget. We met with the Committee on 20 November and provided a written submission on opportunities to improve both mental health and economic inclusion. Our submission to the Committee was informed by significant member consultations and outlined specific actions to improve support systems.

2026-27 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION - JANUARY 2026

In January, Mental Health Australia submitted our 2026-27 Pre-Budget Submission, following on from member consultations conducted between October 2025 and January 2026. The submission called on the Australian Government to address the significant social and economic challenges impacting the mental health and wellbeing of Australians through investment in mental health, action on disadvantage and equitable access to mental health supports. The submission also made specific recommendations to strengthen mental health system foundations, including funding, navigation and workforce.

SUBMISSION ON THE NDIS FRAMEWORK PLANNING RULES – MARCH 2026

In March, Mental Health Australia made a joint submission with the Australian Psychosocial Alliance on the new NDIS Framework Planning Rules. Recommendations were made to tailor new framework planning to better meet the needs of people with psychosocial disability, including progressing work on a new approach to NDIS supports for people with psychosocial disability, focused on personal recovery. The submission also recommended ensuring psychosocial-specific navigation support for the NDIS New Framework Planning reforms; and tailoring of the support needs assessment tools and process for people with psychosocial disability.

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE NDIS (SECURING THE NDIS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS) BILL 2026 – MAY 2026

In May 2026, Mental Health Australia made a submission to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the NDIS Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill 2026.

The submission pointed to the disproportional impacts of the proposed legislation for people with psychosocial disability and made recommendations for amendments to mitigate key risks. The submission was developed with targeted consultation in extremely short timeframes. Of the 15 recommendations in Mental Health Australia's submission to the Inquiry, six were partially actioned through amendments to the Bill and further consultations. This included the appointment of a representative with psychosocial expertise to the Technical Advisory Group advising on NDIS eligibility and access.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) psychosocial supports advocacy

In addition to the submissions on NDIS reforms outlined above, Mental Health Australia also continued to contribute through key NDIA advisory mechanisms, including the NDIS Mental Health Sector Reference Group and Disability Representative and Carer Organisation forums, where we raised concerns about declining NDIS access rates for people with psychosocial disability and informed discussions on psychosocial early intervention and NDIS reforms.

In May, we attended our last NDIS Disability Representative and Carer Organisation meeting. We advocated for transition of membership of this group to the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance and Mental Health Carers Australia as the appropriate organisations to provide ongoing lived experience consumer and carer representation.

Federal Budget overview

Mental Health Australia provided members with a comprehensive analysis of mental health measures in the Federal Budget on the evening of 12 May, along with a media release. While we welcomed the extension of funding for critical supports, we noted that the Budget failed to deliver a much-needed expansion of mental health services against a backdrop of rising community distress. We acknowledged the Budget contained some important investments in areas such as housing, tax reform, and cost of living relief, which all influence mental health outcomes. We also acknowledged the challenging fiscal environment facing the Government, including global uncertainty and rising cost of living pressures.

National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network

Mental Health Australia continued to facilitate the National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group and Network, providing a structured mechanism for sector input into the implementation of the National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022–2032.

During the year we:

- developed three sector guidance briefs on implementation priorities, workforce wellbeing and innovative models of care
- held consultations on the National Mental Health Workforce Capability Framework, with the majority of the sector's advice incorporated into the final draft Framework
- provided advice on workforce priorities for the next National Agreement.

This ensured sector perspectives informed the work of the National Mental Health Workforce Working Group and were reflected across key national workforce reforms and policy documents. The value of this contribution was recognised through the extension of the Advisory Group and Network to June 2027.

Image of Sector workforce priorities document



Increasing NGO data in the National Mental Health Commission report card

Mental Health Australia was engaged by the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC) to explore opportunities to increase reporting on non-government delivered mental health services in the NMHC's annual National Report Cards. Mental Health Australia conducted a desktop review of the NGO data landscape, undertook targeted consultations with NGO service providers and data custodians and hosted an online consultation to test our draft findings and recommendations with the sector.

We provided a final report, Increasing NGO data in the National Report Card, to the NMHC in April, which was published alongside the National Report Card in August 2026. The final report provided key findings and recommendations to support the inclusion of NGO services in the National Report Card and inform longer-term reforms to strengthen the collection, reporting and visibility of NGO mental health activity and outcomes data across Australia.

Many of Mental Health Australia's recommendations were either incorporated in the 2025 National Report Card or are being considered for future Report Cards, including:

- Incorporation of data about NDIS participants with psychosocial disability
- Ongoing work to address the data gap in primary and community mental health
- Longer-term work with data custodians on incorporating additional data sources.

Government engagement

Mental Health Australia provided briefs for the incoming government, opposition and crossbench on mental health and psychosocial disability. The briefs outlined sector priorities and invited continued collaboration with Mental Health Australia to support progress on essential mental health and NDIS reform during this term of Parliament.

Mental Health Australia maintained strong parliamentary engagement throughout the year, including regularly meeting with Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing; the Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention; and the Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health.

We also engaged broadly across parliament through our second Mental Health Expo on 5 March, and participated in key parliamentary events, such as the roundtable on under 16 social media restrictions convened by the Minister for Communications in October 2025; and parliamentary friends of mental health events throughout the year.

Mental Health Australia also continued to maintain strong and regular engagement with the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and briefed the Treasury and Department of Finance on mental health sector priorities and opportunities to progress national mental health reform.

National Committee Representation

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

- Digital Mental Health Tools Expert Group
- Equally Well Alliance
- Independent Health and Aged Care Pricing Authority Stakeholder Advisory Committee
- Mental Health Advisory Group, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Data Governance Forum
- Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials Group – Safety and Quality Group
- National Mental Health Commission – Advisory Council
- National Mental Health Commission – Report Card Working Group
- National Mental Health Workforce Sector Advisory Group
- National Mental Health Workforce Working Group
- NDIS Disability Representative and Carer Organisation Forum
- NDIS National Mental Health Sector Reference Group
- NDIS Quarterly Reform Forum
- Strengthening Medicare Implementation Oversight Committee
- Youth Mental Health Models of Care Expert Advisory Group



Media and Communications

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Strategic media engagement remains a key part of our advocacy efforts to drive national mental health policy reform. Throughout 2025–2026, 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.

Mental Health Australia released six media releases and garnered 40 media mentions on a range of issues, promoting national action on mental health.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Mental Health Australia continued to connect with members and the broader mental health sector through Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Our social media channels played an important role in sharing advocacy priorities, sector news and campaign activities. On LinkedIn, our content reached an average of over 16,000 people each month.



Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski being interviewed on SBS World News about the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health research report The State of Multicultural Mental Health in Australia (below).



Sector Communications

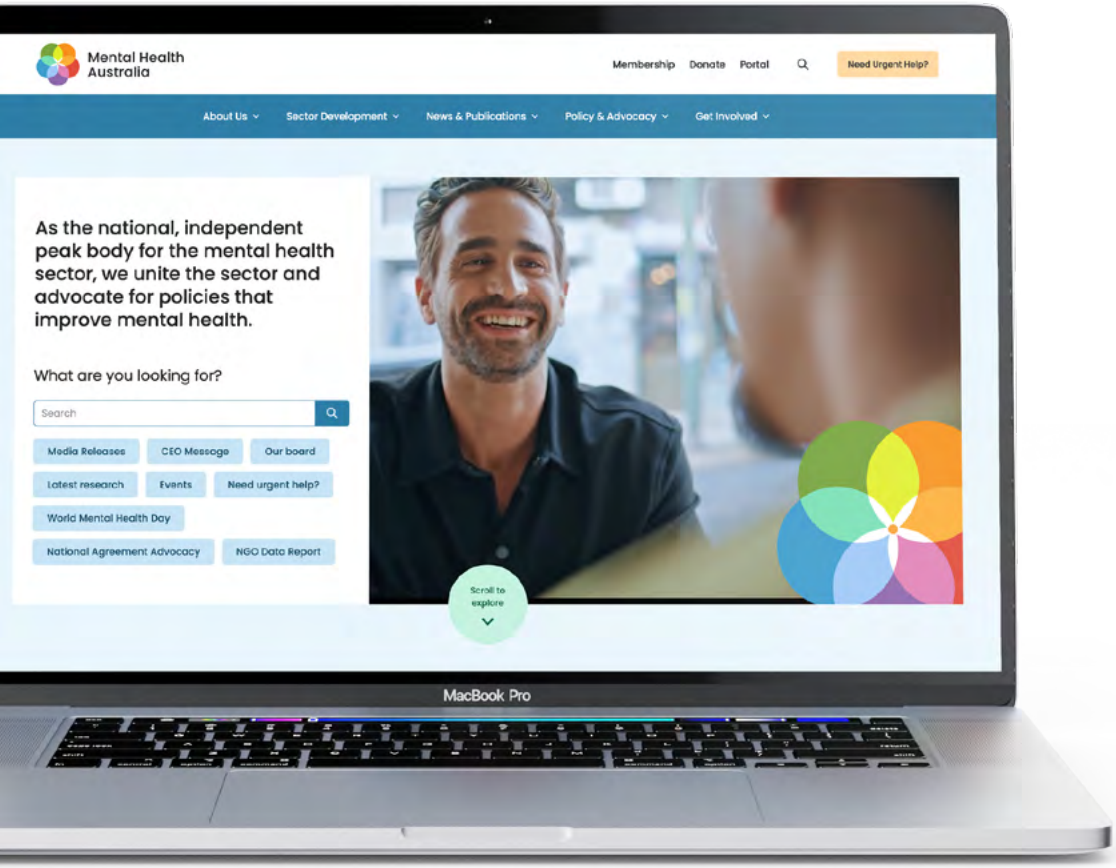
Mental Health Australia's weekly CEO Update newsletter continued to be a valued communication channel for our members and stakeholders, reaching over 4,500 subscribers each week. In 2025–2026 we published 48 editions of the CEO Update, reinforcing our commitment to informative, consistent sector-wide engagement.

New website launched

Mental Health Australia launched its redesigned website in July, creating a more contemporary, accessible and user-focused digital experience for members, stakeholders and the wider community.

Developed to better reflect Mental Health Australia's leadership role in the sector, the new website features intuitive navigation, improved information architecture, a mobile-friendly design and enhanced accessibility, making it easier for users to find resources, policy positions, news and sector insights. The platform also provides a more engaging and visually compelling experience, with streamlined content management that enables timely updates and ensures information remains current and relevant.

The website has received positive feedback from users, members and stakeholders, who praised its clear presentation of information and improved user experience. The redevelopment has strengthened Mental Health Australia's digital presence and enhanced its ability to connect, inform and advocate on behalf of the mental health sector.



Strategic Goal ②

We unite and strengthen the mental health sector

Shared Agenda for Change

This year, we continued to develop our Shared Agenda for Change initiative, which aims to strengthen alignment across the mental health sector to support shared outcomes.

As part of this work, Mental Health Australia piloted a Leadership Development Program in Melbourne in June 2026, bringing together senior leaders from member organisations. As the first initiative delivered under the Shared Agenda for Change, the pilot aimed to inform the development of a leadership program focused on helping leaders navigate uncertainty and support staff through short-term funding cycles, uncertainty, and change.

The topic was selected in response to member feedback identifying short-term funding cycles as a significant challenge for workforce wellbeing, retention, organisational stability and long-term planning. While our broader advocacy for improved funding and contracting arrangements remains a priority, we recognise the need to support leaders in managing these challenges in the meantime.

Participant feedback highlighted the value of connecting with peers across the sector to share experiences, discuss common challenges and learn from one another. The pilot demonstrated strong demand for professional development that combines practical learning with peer engagement. Insights from the pilot will help shape future leadership and sector development activities. We thank all members who participated and contributed their time, expertise and insights.

Goal:

We unite and strengthen the mental health sector.

Initiatives:

Through our Shared Agenda for Change, Mental Health Australia aims to align parts of the sector to deliver shared outcomes so we can have a greater collective impact.

We 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.

We also facilitate opportunities for our members to come together to collaborate, share information and insights, and inform our work.



Building capacity and capability through Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health (Embrace) provides a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from multicultural backgrounds.

Embrace is focused on working towards an equitable mental health system that reflects and responds well to the needs of Australia's multicultural community.

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 multicultural 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 40,000 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:

- 'Supporting cultural responsiveness in youth mental health through the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia'.
- 'State of Multicultural Mental Health in Australia Research Report'.

These webinars collectively attracted over 800 registrations from across Australia, highlighting strong sector-wide engagement and a commitment to culturally safe and inclusive mental health and suicide prevention practices.

The Embrace Lived Experience Group and Embrace team members gather at the group's face-to-face meeting in Canberra, 2026



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.

As of 30 June 2026, 2,827 users were registered for the Framework.

Sign up and access the Framework via our website.



Embrace Lived Experience Group members work together during a collaborative project session in Canberra, 2026

Embedding cultural responsiveness in youth mental health services

This year, Embrace partnered with the headspace National Multicultural Practice Team to pilot the Framework across five headspace centres. The pilot demonstrated that the Framework is an effective tool for strengthening cultural responsiveness and improving how services engage with multicultural young people and their families.

All participating centres completed the Framework and implemented action plans that enhanced workforce capability, community engagement, multicultural data collection, interpreter use and access to culturally appropriate resources. The project also helped to shift cultural responsiveness from an individual responsibility to a whole-of-service commitment.

A key finding was that meaningful change is most effective when supported by strong leadership, structured implementation support and ongoing organisational commitment. The pilot provides a strong foundation for broader adoption of the Framework across the headspace network, along with other mental health and suicide prevention services, supporting more equitable and culturally responsive mental health care for young people from multicultural communities.

Learn more by watching the webinar on our website.

Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot

Through the Embrace Suicide Prevention Pilot (ESPP), Mental Health Australia continued to strengthen the capacity of Australia's suicide prevention sector to better support people from multicultural backgrounds. The pilot focuses on embedding cultural responsiveness across suicide prevention programs and services, and ensuring the voices and experiences of multicultural communities inform the sector.

During the year, Embrace provided intensive implementation support to Lifeline Australia and Wesley Mission as they applied the Framework within their organisations. The Framework was also reviewed and enhanced, with updated suicide prevention content, new implementation tools and a formal continuous improvement process established to support ongoing relevance and sector uptake.

Embrace expanded its suicide prevention knowledge-sharing activities through sector engagement, resource development and national advocacy. The Embrace Knowledge Hub now includes 26 suicide prevention resources. Lived experience representatives played a central role in delivering a panel session at the 2026 National Suicide Prevention Conference, sharing practical insights on culturally responsive suicide prevention and the importance of community-led approaches.

A key achievement was the delivery of three community-led initiatives designed to increase understanding of suicide prevention in multicultural communities:

- Educaid Australia delivered culturally and faith-responsive workshops for Muslim communities, focusing on faith, family, community connection, stigma reduction, and trusted support.
- Shapes and Sounds co-designed an eight-episode podcast series with international students, exploring social connection, cultural strengths, peer support, wellbeing and help-seeking.
- STARTTS partnered with the Mandaean community to deliver suicide prevention and mental health literacy training, wellbeing activities, peer groups and culturally safe referral pathways.

Throughout the year, Embrace continued to build partnerships across the suicide prevention, multicultural and mental health sectors, contributing expertise to advisory groups and sector initiatives. Collectively, this work is helping create a more inclusive and culturally responsive suicide prevention system for Australia's diverse communities.

Embrace partnered with Shapes and Sounds to deliver a series of podcasts co-designed with international students. This image features students who participated in the project



Embrace team members attend the National Suicide Prevention Conference in Sydney, 2026 (top).

Embrace Lived Experience Group and Embrace team members at the National Suicide Prevention Conference in Sydney, 2026 (bottom).





Multicultural Mental Health Research Project

We partnered with Western Sydney University to deliver the State of Multicultural Mental Health in Australia report, a major national research project examining mental health outcomes for migrants and refugees, barriers to care, and effective models of practice for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Guided by an Advisory Group that included members with lived experience, the project provides a comprehensive evidence base to support policy, service development and system reform.

The research found that while overseas-born Australians reported a lower 12-month prevalence of anxiety and mood disorders than Australian-born people, people who have recently arrived in Australia experienced the highest rates among overseas-born groups. It also identified significant inequities in access to care, with overseas-born people more likely to delay treatment for more than 10 years. The evidence highlighted the importance of culturally responsive, co-designed and strength-based approaches, developed in partnership with communities and supported by bilingual and bicultural workers, with these models showing stronger engagement, higher acceptability and better outcomes for multicultural communities.

The report was completed and formally launched in May 2026, marking the culmination of a 13-year follow-up to the landmark 2013 Mental Health in Multicultural Australia report led by Associate Professor Harry Minas. The research delivers a suite of recommendations for government, service providers and the broader mental health sector.

Following publication, we promoted the report through sector networks and communication channels, reaching more than 10,000 stakeholders. It attracted 1,519 report views during this reporting period and was featured in Mental Health Australia communications, including a CEO blog. We hosted a national webinar with the lead researcher and an Embrace Lived Experience Group member, which attracted 245 attendees and a further 84 recording views.

The report also received national media coverage through SBS World News and SBS Online. Feedback from the mental health, multicultural and settlement sectors has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the report's relevance, practical value and importance in informing future multicultural mental health policy and service delivery.



Read the full report via our website.

Improving access to mental health information for multicultural communities

This year, Embrace launched a suite of translated mental health resources developed in partnership with the Embrace Lived Experience Group to help make mental health information more accessible for multicultural communities.

The resources provide simple, practical information about mental health and how to seek support, covering topics including:

- What is mental health
- Getting mental health help
- What is anxiety
- What is depression
- Getting professional mental health help.

Available in 19 languages, we co-designed the resources with people who bring lived experience and cultural insight, ensuring the content is relevant, accessible and responsive to the needs of diverse communities.

The resources are available in Arabic, Assyrian, Burmese, Dari, Persian (Farsi), Filipino (Tagalog), Greek, Hazaragi, Hindi, Italian, Khmer, Nepali, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Swahili, Tamil, Vietnamese and English.

This work supports Embrace's commitment to reducing barriers to mental health information, promoting help-seeking and ensuring people from multicultural backgrounds can access culturally appropriate information when and where they need it.

View these resources on our website.

Embrace team and an MHA member at the Mental Health Sector Expo



CALD co-designed adaptation of a Digital Mental Health Service Project Pilot

Mental Health Australia is working with partners to develop a world-first multilingual digital mental health service designed to reduce mental distress and improve access to support for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, the pilot will adapt St Vincent's Health Australia's existing THIS WAY UP digital platform to better meet the needs of diverse communities. The project is being co-designed and piloted with the Chinese community through a partnership between St Vincent's Health Australia, Mental Health Australia and the Chinese Australian Services Society (CASS).

Approximately 130 members of the Chinese Australian community in Sydney participated in co-design workshops conducted in Mandarin and Cantonese, with strong involvement from people with lived experience, families, carers and supporters.

A culturally responsive and adaptable co-design framework guided the project, drawing on culturally specific community engagement and co-design principles to maximise meaningful participation, inclusivity and community-led feedback throughout the process. The adapted platform is expected to be piloted with the Chinese Australian community in 2027. The project will generate valuable insights into the development of culturally responsive digital mental health services and inform opportunities to expand the model to other CALD communities across Australia.



Participants of one of the co-design workshops - (CALD co-designed adaptation of a Digital Mental Health Service Project Pilot area) (top)



Project Working Group members from Mental Health Australia, St Vincent's Health and CASS - (CALD co-designed adaptation of a Digital Mental Health Service Project Pilot area) (bottom)

World Mental Health Day campaign

Mental Health Australia continued its national leadership of Mental Health Month and World Mental Health Day, bringing together communities, organisations and individuals to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the country.

Our 2025 World Mental Health Day campaign, Connect with your Community, encouraged people to strengthen connections and engage with the people, places and groups that support their mental health and wellbeing.

The campaign featured a suite of digital resources, including mental health calendars providing practical daily wellbeing tips throughout October. Resources were developed in partnership with member organisations ReachOut for the youth calendar and Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander calendar.

The campaign generated strong engagement, with more than 104,000 website views between 14 September and 31 October 2025. During September and October, Mental Health Calendars were downloaded 6,070 times, and the Supporter Toolkit was downloaded 2,658 times.

An independent evaluation conducted by Verian found strong support for the campaign, with participants valuing the practical resources and community-focused messaging. Feedback highlighted the campaign's effectiveness in raising awareness of mental health, encouraging meaningful conversations, and providing simple actions to strengthen social connections and support wellbeing.





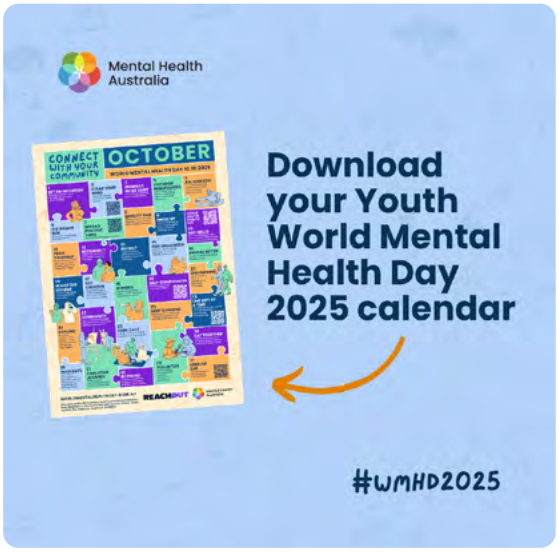


Image of World Mental Health Day 2025 social media campaign (middle) and World Mental Health Day 2025 Calendar (bottom).

Sector Engagement

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

Mental Health Sector Expo

On 5 March, Mental Health Australia hosted its second Mental Health Sector Expo at Australian Parliament House, opened by the Minister for Health, Disability and Ageing, the Hon. Mark Butler MP.

More than 160 people from 56 Mental Health Australia member organisations travelled from across the country to take part, providing a valuable opportunity for so many people from across the sector to come together in one place.

The Expo attracted 33 members of parliament and their staff, who engaged directly with Mental Health Australia members, including lived experience representatives, service providers, professional associations, advocates and researchers. These conversations helped build the relationships and shared understanding needed to strengthen Australia's mental health system.

Mental Health Australia supported parliamentarian engagement through a range of activities, including an Expo passport, merchandise incentives and social media opportunities.

"The access to policy makers and being able to stand united alongside other key players was important to us." – Mental Health Australia Member

Beyond Blue representative at Mental Health Australia's Sector Expo 2026 (top) and Mental Health Australia members Orygen presenting at the Sector Expo (bottom).





Sector Expo in March 2026







Members' Policy Forums

The Mental Health Australia Members' 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 2025

Mental Health Australia's Members' Policy Forum on 12 November 2025 in Melbourne focused on building capability and strengthening connections for collective advocacy ahead of negotiations for the next National Agreement.

Part of the day was dedicated to exploring members' priorities around children's mental health and principles for better commissioning through facilitated workshops.

The event attracted 96 attendees, with 60 member organisations represented across online and in-person participation.

The Hon. Emma McBride MP, Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, opened the Forum and shared the government's vision for mental health reform.

Other speakers included Dr Peggy Brown AO, Chair, Mental Health Australia; Kate Colvin, CEO, Homelessness Australia; Amanda Threlfall, Victorian Trades Hall Council; Joe Ball, Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities; David McGrath, CEO, National Mental Health Commission; and Daniel Scoullar, Director, Social Change Projects.

We also held two fantastic workshops. The first, on commissioning principles, featured Priscilla Brice, CEO, National Mental Health Consumer Alliance; Taryn Harvey, CEO, Western Australian Association for Mental Health; and Phil Amos, National Policy and Capacity Building Manager, Mental Health & AOD, PHN Cooperative.

The second workshop focused on child mental health priorities and featured Brad Morgan, Director, Emerging Minds; Katrina Armstrong, CEO, Mental Health Carers Australia; Geri Sumpter, Head of Be You, Beyond Blue; and Dr Suzy Honsiett, Manager, National Child and Family Hubs Network.

We also received a government update from Krista Vanderheide, Assistant Secretary, System Enablers Branch, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Division, Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and a presentation from Dr Angela Jackson, Commissioner, and Dr Alison Roberts, Commissioner, Productivity Commission.

Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski presenting at the Members Policy Forum, November 2025 (top)

Members and guests at the Members Policy Forum, November 2025 (middle)

From left to right: Emma Greeney (Mental Health Australia) Amanda Threlfall (Victorian Trades Hall Council) Kate Colvin (Homelessness Australia) Joe Ball (Victorian Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities). (bottom)







"I enjoyed the mix of perspectives and speakers – it was a good chance to step back and think about what's happening around the sector and to network and connect with others." - Mental Health Australia member.

MAY 2026

The first Members' Policy Forum of 2026 was held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on 14 May, during Federal Budget week. The Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, the Hon. Emma McBride MP, opened the event.

Held shortly after the release of the 2026 Federal Budget, the Forum provided a timely opportunity for members to come together, consider the next steps for the sector and identify shared priorities for mental health reform.

The event brought together more than 137 representatives from 82 member organisations to consider and inform national mental health reform priorities.

We also hosted the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to facilitate a consultation with members on priorities for the National Agreement.

Other speakers included: Mr Henry Pike MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health and the NDIS; Gavin Matthews, First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing; Dr Peggy Brown AO, Chair, Mental Health Australia; Rachel Fishlock, CEO, Gayaa Dhuwi; Priscilla Brice, CEO, National Mental Health Consumer Alliance; Associate Professor Grant Blashki, Nossal Institute for Global Health University of Melbourne; Professor Jill Newby, Head of Clinical Research, Black Dog Institute; Dr Rachel Tindall, Chief National Programs, Orygen; Vikki Ryall, Chief Clinical Officer, headspace.

"I thought the direct input from the department was highly valuable and the discussions in the room were relevant and outcome focused. I enjoyed the discussion on AI; it was super relevant"
– Mental Health Australia member









Image of Aunty Serena Palm delivering the Welcome to Country at Mental Health Australia's Members Policy Forum (top).

Hellen Kibowen and Priyanka Rai from FECCA at Mental Health Australia's Members Policy Forum (second from top).

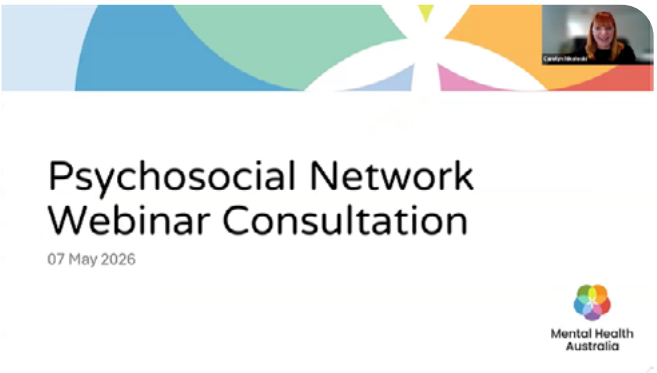
Gayaa Dhuwi CEO, Rachel Fishlock presenting at Mental Health Australia's Members Policy Forum, May 2026 (third from top).

From left to right - Priscilla Brice (National Mental Health Consumer Alliance), Jane Cameron (St Vincent's Health), Dr Rachel Tindall (Orygen), Gavin Matthews (Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing), Emma Greeney (Mental Health Australia) and Vikki Ryall (headspace National).

Webinars and consultations

Throughout the year, Mental Health Australia hosted a series of webinars and consultations to engage members, share sector developments and inform our policy and advocacy work.









- **August 2025 – Psychosocial supports:** We hosted a webinar with our Member Psychosocial Network to inform an update to our Statement on Addressing Unmet Need for Psychosocial Support Outside the NDIS and discuss the current strategic and political context. The webinar was attended by 32 Network members.
- **August 2025 – National Mental Health Commission Report Card:** We partnered with the National Mental Health Commission to deliver a webinar on the findings of its 2024 National Report Card, attended by representatives from more than 50 organisations.
- **October 2025 – Pre-Budget and Economic Inclusion consultations:** We held a webinar consultation with 28 member representatives to inform our Pre-Budget Submission and submission to the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee. Discussion included the importance of considering the political context when developing impactful recommendations.
- **February 2026 – NGO data:** We held a webinar consultation with 29 member representatives to inform a report for the National Mental Health Commission on improving NGO data in national mental health reporting. The webinar was attended by 47 members.
- **May 2026 – Addressing unmet psychosocial support needs:** We hosted a webinar with our Member Psychosocial Network to consult on principles for psychosocial supports outside the NDIS to inform our advocacy for the next National Agreement. At the webinar, the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing also consulted members to inform their consideration of a potential national psychosocial support program.

How we work

Embedding Lived Experience at Mental Health Australia

Mental Health Australia is committed to ensuring people with a lived and living experience of mental health challenges and their families, carers and kin remain central to our work. This critical work will enhance our contribution to a more inclusive and responsive mental health system.

In October 2025, Mental Health Australia signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance and Mental Health Carers Australia. This documents the commitment to working together to improve mental health for all people in Australia and acknowledges the strength and wisdom that comes through working together.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Representation

To achieve a person-centred mental health and suicide prevention system for all people living in Australia, the National Agreement requires the meaningful involvement of people with lived experience of mental health challenges and/or suicide, as well as their families, carers and kin, throughout its implementation.

Throughout the year, Mental Health Australia continued to support the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Senior Officials (MHSPSO) Lived Experience Group (LEG), ensuring diverse lived experience perspectives informed the governance and implementation of the National Agreement. The LEG advised on a range of areas, including service design, planning, implementation, evaluation, data, and governance.

The MHSPSO LEG met on four occasions during the year. These meetings enabled members to provide feedback on the Productivity Commission's Interim Report on the National Agreement, as well as other initiatives and activities within the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's remit.

LEG members also shared feedback on their experience of participating in MHSPSO processes to inform the Annual National Progress Report 2024-25. In addition, several members served as representatives on MHSPSO working groups. Secretariats of these working groups reported that the contributions of lived experience representatives were invaluable in advancing key priorities and objectives.

The MHSPSO LEG concluded on 30 June 2026. Going forward, mental health lived experience representative opportunities will be facilitated through the national lived experience peak bodies: the National Mental Health Consumer Alliance, Mental Health Carers Australia, and the Indigenous Australian Lived Experience Centre.

Through the work of the LEG, lived experience perspectives have continued to play a critical role in shaping the implementation of the National Agreement and strengthening efforts to deliver a more responsive, inclusive and person-centred mental health and suicide prevention system.

Left to right, Mental Health Carers Australia CEO Katrina Armstrong, Mental Health Australia CEO Carolyn Nikoloski and National Mental Health Consumer Alliance CEO Priscilla Brice.



Our People

Membership

Mental Health Australia membership has grown steadily over the last financial year and currently includes 160 members, including service providers, organisations representing people with mental health challenges, their families, carers and kin, professional bodies, researchers, and national, state and territory peak bodies. During 2025-26 we welcomed 14 new organisations to Mental Health Australia's membership.

Feedback from members remains positive. Results from our August 2025 membership satisfaction and sector perspectives survey showed members were satisfied with their membership experience and highly likely to recommend Mental Health Australia to others. Members also reported feeling well informed about our initiatives and advocacy work and considered Mental Health Australia effective in representing the sector nationally, with all measures scoring above 4 out of 5.



Mental Health Carers Australia CEO Katrina Armstrong (left) and Arafmi CEO Irene Clelland

Member organisations as of 30 June 2026

Full Members

1. ALIVE National Centre for Mental Health Research Translation
2. Arafmi
3. Australasian Confederation of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapies
4. Australian Association of Social Workers
5. Australian BPD Foundation
6. Australian Clinical Psychology Association
7. Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
8. Australian Counselling Association
9. Australian Kookaburra Kids Foundation
10. Australian Music Therapy Association
11. Australian Psychological Society
12. .Australian Rotary Health
13. .Australian Society for Psychological Medicine
14. Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors
15. Australian, New Zealand and Asian Creative Arts Therapies Association
16. Batyr Australia
17. Being - Mental Health Consumers
18. Beyond Blue
19. Black Dog Institute
20. Blue Knot Foundation
21. Brain Mind Centre
22. Butterfly Foundation
23. Carers Australia
24. Catholic Social Services Australia
25. Centre for Mental Health Research (Australian National University)
26. Community Mental Health Australia
27. Consortium for Research in Eating Disorders Limited*
28. Consumers of Mental Health WA
29. Dementia Australia
30. Dietitians Australia
31. Eating Disorders Families Australia
32. Emerging Minds
33. Everymind
34. Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia *
35. Flourish Australia
36. Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia
37. Gidget Foundation Australia
38. Grief Australia
39. GROW
40. Growing Minds Australia*
41. Hand n Hand
42. headspace
43. Independent Community Living Australia
44. Inside out & associates Australia
45. Institute of Clinical Psychologists
46. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia
47. Lifeline Australia
48. Lived Experience Australia
49. Lived Experience Leadership and Advocacy Network
50. LivingWorks Australia *
51. Manna Institute
52. Meaningful Ageing Australia
53. Mental Health Australia General Clinical Trial Network
54. Mental Health Carers Australia
55. Mental Health Coalition of SA
56. Mental Health Community Coalition ACT
57. Mental Health Coordinating Council NSW
58. Mental Health Council of Tasmania
59. Mental Health First Aid Australia
60. Mental Health Foundation Australia
61. Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland
62. Mental Health Lived Experience Tasmania
63. Mental Health Policy Unit
64. Mental Health Professionals Network
65. Mental Health Victoria
66. Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia
67. Mind Australia
68. Mindgardens Neuroscience Research Australia
69. MindSpot
70. National Eating Disorders Collaboration

71. National Mental Health Consumer Alliance
72. National Rural Health Alliance
73. Neami National
74. NT Mental Health Coalition
75. Occupational Therapy Australia
76. Orygen
77. Ostara Australia Limited
78. Parent-Infant Research Institute
79. Prevention United
80. Psychosis Australia Trust
81. Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia
82. Psychology for a Safe Climate
83. Queensland Alliance for Mental Health
84. Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research
85. R U OK? Foundation
86. ReachOut Australia
87. Red Nose Australia *
88. Relationships Australia
89. Richmond Fellowship of Queensland Ltd*
90. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
91. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
92. Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia
93. SANE Australia
94. Sleep Health Foundation
95. Smiling Mind
96. Society for Mental Health Research
97. Speech Pathology Australia
98. Stride
99. SuperFriend
100. TheMHS Learning Network Inc
101. Thirrili Ltd *
102. Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council
103. WA Association for Mental Health
104. Wellways
105. Womens Mental Health Australia
106. Youturn Youth Support

Note: Members marked with an asterisk are new members who joined during this financial year.*

Photo at Mental Health Sector Expo



Associate Members:

1. ACT Mental Health Consumer Network
2. Allied Health Professions Australia
3. ANTSA*
4. Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria
5. Australian & New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders*
6. Bipolar Australia
7. Brisbane North PHN
8. Brisbane Youth Service
9. Cairnmillar Institute*
10. Carers ACT
11. CatholicCare NT
12. CatholicCare Victoria
13. Centre for Muslim Wellbeing
14. CoHealth
15. Communify
16. Connections Inc
17. Converge International
18. Eating Disorders Queensland
19. Ending Loneliness Together
20. Exercise & Sports Science Australia
21. FearLess Outreach
22. Focused Mental Education
23. Helping Minds
24. Human Nature Adventure Therapy *
25. Innowell
26. JUNO Services
27. KidsXpress
28. Marathon Health
29. Mental Health Partners
30. Mental Illness Education
31. Mentally Healthy WA
32. Mentis Assist
33. Micah Projects
34. Mind Medicine Australia
35. Movember Foundation
36. Occupational Therapy Society for Invisible Disabilities*
37. One Door Mental Health
38. Open Minds
39. Outcome Health*
40. Pathways SouthWest Inc
41. Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia
42. Pharmacy Guild of Australia
43. PHN Cooperative
44. Primary & Community Care Services
45. Relationships Australia Victoria
46. Ruah Community Services
47. Skylight Mental Health
48. Sonder
49. Stepping Stone Clubhouse*
50. Tandem
51. TeamHEALTH
52. The Man Cave*
53. Tully Support Centre
54. WayAhead - Mental Health Association NSW

*New members that joined in this financial year.

Our People

Our Board

Mental Health Australia is governed by a Board of up to 10 Directors. The Board must consist of at least three and up to seven Elected Directors, and up to three Board Appointed Directors. Elected Directors must include at least one person nominated by a consumer member and one person nominated by a carer member.

BOARD DIRECTORS 2025-2026

Dr Peggy Brown AO
Board Appointed Director and Chair
January 2025 – present

Mark Orr AM
Deputy Chair
Governance Committee Chair
Elected Director
November 2020 – present

Katrina Armstrong
Elected Director
November 2024 – present

Nicola Ballenden
Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee Chair
Elected Director
January 2023 – present

Rachel Fishlock
Elected Director
November 2024 – present

Kellie-Ann Hodges
Elected Director
November 2025 – present

Prof Sharon Lawn
Elected Director
December 2021 – November 2025

Dr Sara Quinn
Elected Director
November 2024 – present

Geoffrey Radford
Elected Director
November 2025 – present

Helen Rowell
Board Appointed Director
April 2024 – present

Dr Evelyne Tadros
Elected Director
November 2023 – November 2025

Assoc Prof Melanie Turner
Finance, Audit and Risk Management Committee Chair (until November 2025)
Elected Director
November 2023 – November 2025

FARM COMMITTEE EXTERNAL MEMBERS 2025-2026

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

Georgina Crundell
Appointed June 2025 - present

Our Team

Mental Health Australia's success depends on the experience and dedication of our staff. The team combines extensive skills in mental health, policy, government relations, stakeholder engagement, sector development, communications, event management, program delivery, multicultural mental health, business, governance, management, planning and administration. Staff as of 30 June 2026 were:

Amy Byrne
People and Culture Manager

Bao Ngo
Finance Officer

Breanna Bolijkovac
Membership and Governance Officer

Caroline Illingworth
Senior Communications Manager

Carolyn Nikoloski
Chief Executive Officer

Crystal Paniccia
Senior Program Manager – Embrace

Danica Browne
Manager Lived Experience Programs

Emma Coughlan
Senior Policy and Projects Officer

Emma Greeney
Director of Policy and Advocacy

Ingrid Hatfield
Deputy Director Policy and Advocacy

Kath Sequoia
Director of Membership, Governance & Company Secretary

Kelsey Hilder
Executive Assistant & Project Officer

Matthew Potts
Senior Project Officer – Embrace

Michelle Possingham
Director of Programs and Sector Development

Naushin Khan
Senior Project Officer – Community Engagement

Nikki Hogan
Senior Events & Website Manager

Renata Anderson
Senior Policy and Project Officer

Ruth Das
Engagement & Partnerships Lead – Embrace

Simon Ash
Director Corporate Services

Urooj Hanafi
Embrace Project Officer

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 continued to work on our second Innovate RAP. Each year, Mental Health Australia provides staff with access to cultural training and actively participates in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events. Read more about our RAP on page 40.

Promoting employee health, safety and wellbeing

Employee health, safety and wellbeing are of the utmost importance to Mental Health Australia, and we work to continuously improve our workplace. A range of preventative health measures and wellbeing 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 from work undertaken by employees.

Some of the Mental Health Australia team.



Strengthening our people and culture

Mental Health Australia launched a People and Culture Strategy in 2024-25 to embed our organisational values, foster a positive and inclusive workplace culture, enhance our ways of working, and strategically strengthen our workforce capacity, capability and staffing mix.

We are pleased to report that most actions within our Year 1 Action Plan for 2025–26 were successfully completed.

We undertake regular staff pulse surveys to measure our progress against the People and Culture Strategy. Results continue to demonstrate high levels of employee engagement and our commitment to fostering a positive workplace culture.

100%

of respondents would recommend Mental Health Australia as a great place to work.

94%

of respondents believe we are broadly consistent in demonstrating our value of **Connection.**

89%

of respondents believe we are broadly consistent in demonstrating our values of **Curiosity** and **Courage.**

89%

of respondents said their contributions are recognised at Mental Health Australia.

89%

of respondents believe their work contributes to the success of the organisation.

Reconciliation Action Plan

Mental Health Australia's vision for reconciliation is a nation that delivers equitable mental health and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes and experiences for all people in Australia. A united country with mentally healthy people and mentally healthy communities, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples no longer experience higher rates of mental ill-health and suicide than non-Indigenous Australians.

Our second Innovate RAP, which was launched in March 2025, is intended to deepen our understanding of our core strengths, expand relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisational members and stakeholders, and use our sphere of influence to support Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia's Declaration and Implementation Plan.

Throughout the year, our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group continued to guide implementation of our RAP. We are grateful to the generous contributions of our independent RAP Working Group members from Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and the Indigenous Australian Lived Experience Centre.



Together We Thrive artwork by Kristie Peters, a proud Wiradjuri Artist, Graphic and Fashion Designer.This artwork encapsulates Mental Health Australia's commitment to nurturing a supportive community where every voice is heard, every story is valued, and every individual is empowered to seek help and thrive.





ACROSS THE YEAR, KEY RAP ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- Welcoming new staff from Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia to our RAP Working Group.
- Inviting Ngunnawal Elder, Aunty Serena Palm (nee Williams), to give Welcome to Country addresses at the Mental Health Sector Expo and May Members Policy Forum.
- Inviting Rachel Fishlock, Mental Health Australia Board Director and CEO of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, to provide reflections and scene-setting at the May Members Policy Forum.
- Inviting Wurundjeri Elder, Uncle John Terrick, to give a Welcome to Country address at the November Members Policy Forum.
- Providing staff with access to cultural training through Indigenous Allied Health Australia.
- Encouraging staff and member participation in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities.
- Featuring guest blogs by Rachel Fishlock, Mental Health Australia Board Director and CEO of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, in the CEO Blog in the Weekly Update, for National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.
- Measuring staff confidence and support needs regarding:

» Acknowledgement of Country, including comfort levels in delivering one publicly and what resources, guidance or learning would help increase confidence.

» Assessing staff engagement with Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) activities over the past 12 months, such as attending cultural events, participating in RAP initiatives, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, cultural learning, and considering Indigenous perspectives in their work.

» Identifying future learning priorities for staff, seeking feedback on topics including cultural safety, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, lived experience, allyship, histories and cultures, respectful engagement, and delivering meaningful Acknowledgements of Country, to help shape future training and RAP activities.

- Sharing resources with staff on Social and Emotional Wellbeing and facilitating a staff reflection and discussion session as part of Reconciliation Week activities
- Updating our Acknowledgment to Country resource guide for staff.
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led member organisations, as well as the Indigenous Australian Lived Experience Centre on policy priorities.
- Submitting a RAP Impact Survey to Reconciliation Australia as part of its annual reporting.
- Seeking out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses to purchase event merchandise.
- Increasing RAP Working Group meeting frequency for deeper discussions.
- Developing a Cultural Learning Strategy.
- The RAP Working Group Chair representing MHA at Reconciliation Australia's annual Canberra Learning Circle.

Thank you

Mental Health Australia extends its heartfelt thanks to our members, stakeholders and the broader mental health sector for their ongoing support, collaboration and commitment throughout 2025–2026. We deeply value the extraordinary efforts across the sector, in providing mental health supports and services, advancing research, delivering programs and progressing advocacy.

We especially recognise people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges, along with their families, carers and kin, whose expertise, courage and advocacy continue to drive meaningful reform. We also thank the policymakers and governments we work alongside.

It is this shared expertise, commitment and collaboration that will help us continue working towards a mentally healthy future for every person in Australia.

Minister for Health, Ageing, Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme The Hon. Mark Butler MP with staff from Mental Health First Aid at our Sector Expo.

