

Position Statement



Mental Health

Anglicare Australia believes that mental health is crucial to our wellbeing and happiness. To create healthy environments and support people across Australia, we must invest in early intervention and put an end to the stigma surrounding mental ill-health. We must also ensure that quality mental health support is available for everybody who needs it.

Our Experience

The Anglicare Australia Network supports thousands of people to manage their mental health. Thirteen Anglicare Australia Network members provide dedicated mental health services, ranging from community based services to residential support. The Network also helps those with psycho-social disabilities as part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). In all, our staff and volunteers provide mental health support services to over 27,000 people across Australia each year.

Key Issues

Mental illness affects millions of people each year. Nearly half of Australians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime, and one in five of us experience a mental illness each year.¹ In spite of this, the stigma and discrimination surrounding mental illness remains.

There is a strong relationship between mental illness and other experiences of disadvantage. For example, people with experiences of trauma, unemployment, and homelessness are also more likely to experience mental illness. These relationships between mental health and disadvantage can exacerbate each other.

The impact of mental illness goes beyond individuals and flows on to the rest of society. Mental illnesses are estimated to be the third most common kind of disease in Australia, behind cancer and cardiovascular disease.² But investments in mental health have been very low compared with other illnesses and are failing to meet need.

The acute care system is failing people in desperate need. People with mental health crises wait much longer at emergency departments, and are more likely to leave before their treatment is finished.³ There is a severe lack of specialist mental health staff, hospital beds, and other support options. And without enough investment in suicide prevention, the suicide rate in Australia has not changed in the last decade.

Although some people with mental illnesses can get help through the NDIS, many are being left behind. A lack of understanding of mental health issues among NDIS planners has meant the transition to the scheme has been turbulent for many people. Our hope is that a pathway for people with psychosocial disability will improve these experiences.

We must also recognise that only a small number of Australians with mental illness will be eligible for the NDIS. Many more thousands of people will need help from community-based services to manage their mental health. These services are underfunded and cannot meet community need, especially in rural and regional Australia.

Developing an inclusive and positive approach to mental health must be a priority for our nation. It is also clear that we must fund mental health services to meet the need across the community.

Recommended Actions

Anglicare Australia calls for:

- An increase public and social housing stock to ensure every Australian managing a mental illness has a secure home
- Funding to end the shortage in mental health crisis intervention services
- The funding and implementation of the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan
- Collaboration with people with mental illness, their families and their carers to ensure the NDIS psychosocial pathway meets their needs
- Security and funding for community mental health services to make sure they can meet demand
- Priority funding for early intervention and services that build social inclusion for people living with chronic mental illness.

1 Department of Health and Ageing (2009) The mental health of Australians 2: Report on the 2007 national survey of mental health and wellbeing.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016) Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact And Causes of Illness and Death in Australia 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series.

3 Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (2018) The Long Wait: An Analysis of Mental Health Presentations to Australian Emergency Departments.