

Addressing the Gap in Psychosocial Supports

National Psychosocial Support Advocacy Alliance

The Problem

Approximately 154,000 Australians with severe and complex mental illness do not receive support from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or from other Commonwealth and State/Territory psychosocial programs. These members of our community are missing out on the community-based psychosocial supports they and their families and carers so desperately need to improve their quality of life and be equally valued and respected.

Addressing this gap is a national Human Rights issue. Achieving better outcomes for *all* people with psychosocial disability ensures that Australia meets its obligations within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. It helps us achieve the inclusive and diverse community that Australians are proud to be known for, that values the potential and contributions of each person.

Without adequate psychosocial supports people with severe and complex mental illness will continue to experience:

- Shorter lives – on average, people with severe mental illness die up to 23 years earlier than the general population
- Attempts to take their own lives – approximately 50% of people with the most severe mental illness attempt suicide, compared to 3.7% of the general population
- Relationship breakdowns, loss of employment, homelessness, marginalisation and stigma, long stays in hospital, increased dependence on income support, loss of educational opportunities, and intersections with police and the justice system.

Funding for psychosocial supports outside of the NDIS has decreased drastically since its introduction and what remains is fragmented, inadequate and inequitable. The system channels people into emergency and hospital services, adding extra pressure to that system and in turn traumatising those involved. We need a focus on prevention and supporting recovery.

The Solution

An alliance of Australia's lived experienced leaders, peak bodies and mental health organisations is calling on all Australian Governments:

- To implement the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's recent Inquiry into Mental Health and establish a National Psychosocial Support Program to support 154,000 Australians living with severe and complex mental illness outside of the NDIS with psychosocial supports that are recovery-oriented, person-led, locally responsive and sufficiently funded to achieve real outcomes and support long-term mental health recovery.
- To ensure that the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement and associated bilateral agreements clearly set out the requirement to support all Australians with psychosocial support needs outside of the NDIS with agreed funding arrangements for the Commonwealth, States and Territories for a four-year roll out and beyond, and with agreed monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements.

The Cost

Existing funding allocations for the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program through Primary Health Networks is approximately \$100M per year. The Productivity Commission estimates that expanding the provision of psychosocial supports to the 154,000 people who are currently missing out on these services would cost an additional \$610M per year (a total of approximately \$710M per year). However, with a National Psychosocial Support Program in place, more expensive interventions such as hospital and primary care, police, housing and ambulance services will reduce, leading to cost savings in these areas.

National Psychosocial Support Advocacy Alliance Campaign Members

An advocacy alliance of Australia's lived experience leaders, peak bodies and mental health organisations

