MENTAL HEALTH FACTSHEET:
Consumers and carers

Mental ill-health affects all Australians, either directly or indirectly through our families, colleagues or friends. But our current mental health services and supports have not kept pace with demand for services. The Productivity Commission's Mental Health Inquiry has provided the Australian Government with a series of recommendations to create a mental health system that:

- places people at the centre of the design and delivery of all community and clinical mental health support services

- adopts a whole-of-life approach based on early intervention and prevention that empowers consumers and their families and carers, and supports them to maintain their health and recover within their community

- improves access to the right services at the right time — local-level planning for what services are required, better use of technology, and strategies to grow the workforce are key factors in improving access for people, especially in regional and remote Australia

- recognises that the value of a service is the value of the outcome to the person using the service, and ensures that services are monitored and evaluated on the basis of these consumer-centred outcomes.

> **Australia needs a mental health system that places people at its centre. In a person-centred system, people would be empowered to choose the services that are right for them across a full spectrum of clinical and non-clinical needs. (volume 2, p. 163)**

Building a person-centred mental health system

We recommend a number of changes to shift the focus of our mental health services and supports so that they become centred around the needs, preferences and aspirations of people.

Key recommended actions include:

- Reducing the gap between the low-intensity healthcare services that are needed by individuals, and what is currently available:

  - Consistent assessment and referral processes that are based on robust clinical evidence and are accessible either through a GP or directly by individuals (action 10.4).

  - Increased access to online treatment that is supported by clinicians, and to group therapy and telehealth, where these are preferred by the consumer (action 11.1).

- Reducing the 'missing middle' gap between mental healthcare services needed by people with moderate to high needs, and what is currently available:

  - Evaluating MBS-rebated psychological therapy (the 'Better Access' program) to assess its effectiveness as a program and to trial an increase in the number of sessions available (action 12.3).

  - Providing a formal coordination service to link up care services for people with severe and complex mental illness (action 15.4), and implementing single care plans for people with moderate to severe mental illness who receive services from multiple providers (action 15.3).

  - Publishing information about the shortfall in funding for non-hospital mental healthcare services, and increasing the funding over time to meet this shortfall and expand access to services in the community (action 12.4).

  - Governments providing more alternatives to emergency care for people with mental illness, including peer- and clinician- led after hours services and mobile crisis services (action 13.1).

- Making sure that support services within local communities are available for the people who need them:

  - Governments to commit to not discharging people from care (including from hospitals and correctional facilities) into a situation of homelessness (action 20.2).

  - Psychosocial support services help people live within their communities — publishing information about the regional funding shortfall for psychosocial supports, and increasing the amount of funding over time to meet this shortfall to make sure that people who need these supports can receive them (action 17.3).

  - Providing legal representation for people who are facing mental health tribunals (action 21.8).

- Providing more consideration, inclusion and support for families and carers within specialist mental healthcare services and support services at a regional level (actions 18.1 and 18.3).

- Making sure that people have access to timely and effective aftercare following a suicide attempt (action 9.1).

- Implementing a national long-term stigma reduction strategy (action 8.1) that focuses on the experiences of people with those mental illnesses that are poorly understood by the wider community.

- Increasing consumer, family and carer participation and advocacy in all aspects of the mental health system.

Mental health is important to everyone. Although it means different things to different people at different points in their life, the capacity to enjoy life, cope with and be resilient in response to stress, set and fulfil goals, and build and maintain relationships are key aspects of being mentally healthy and participating in the community. (volume 2, p. 88)

▶ To find out more go to: **pc.gov.au/mental-health**