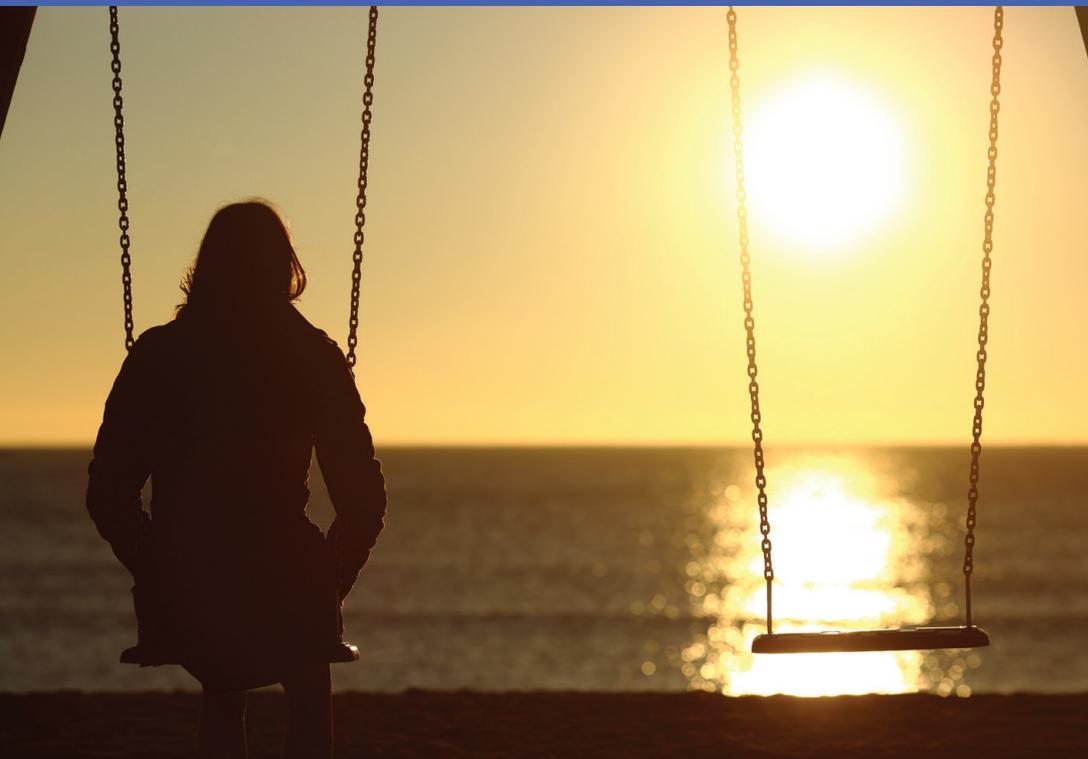


# ISSUES PAPER

## MENTAL HEALTH



Around 4.8 million Australians (20 per cent) had a mental or behavioural condition in 2017-18 up from 4 million (17.5 per cent) in 2014-15.<sup>1</sup>

Mental health is a major issue in our region. A large percentage of people who access community services organisations are living with, or caring for someone living with mental illness.

Our members report an urgent need for increased crisis mental health support services and more Community Mental Health workers in the region. This includes an urgent need for services that can deal with co-morbidity for clients who are experiencing both mental illness and substance abuse issues.

Mental Health support services must also be linked to housing, employment, and community welfare in order to assist people with mental illness stay well and connected to community life. A system that only focuses on providing beds and services when someone is suffering an acute mental health crisis is inadequate.

The region also needs more mental health rehabilitation professionals and other mental health specialists.

### LOCAL SNAPSHOT

- 13.9 % of persons over 16 in the South Eastern NSW Primary Health Network survey reported high or very high psychological distress.<sup>2</sup>
- Suicide rates in SE NSW remain higher than average. Latest data reports more than 10.5 per 100,000 in the Illawarra region and 19.9 per 100,000 in Southern NSW in 2016.
- High rates of self-harm amongst 15-24 year olds especially among Aboriginal young people. Self-harm is particularly high in Bega Valley, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree areas.<sup>3</sup>
- Limited access to culturally appropriate mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Inequitable distribution of services across the region and service availability that does not match population needs particularly in rural areas.

1 (ABS)

2 (2017 HealthStats NSW)

3 (Coordinare; South Eastern NSW Regional Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan 2018-2023)

# ISSUES PAPER - MENTAL HEALTH



The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has had mixed results for people with a mental illness. There appears to be little consistency about the approvals and, if accepted, levels and types of support. There is concern that services for consumers who are not under the NDIS will become increasingly limited over time.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The region urgently needs investment in:

- Specialist Mental Health Crisis services, able to respond to emergency situations involving psychotic episodes instead of relying on Police and Ambulance.
- Clear and easy access to information on all mental health services for people experiencing mental ill health and their families.
- Culturally appropriate mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Rehabilitation services.
- Wellness support services.
- Community-based support services that focus on assisting people to participate in community life, thereby preventing or reducing the need to use mental health crisis services.

