



Prioritising Mental Health and Suicide Prevention – Supporting our vulnerable (Pillar 4)

The Australian Government is investing \$34.9 million to ensure that all Australians have access to culturally appropriate mental health services as part of the *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan – Stage 2*.

This investment builds on the \$2.3 billion initial phase of the Plan announced in the 2021–22 Budget. Together with other mental health and suicide prevention commitments worth \$648.6 million in the 2022–23 Budget, it takes the total value of the Plan to nearly \$3 billion.

Since 2012–13, the Australian Government’s investment through the Health portfolio in mental health and suicide prevention has more than doubled (106% increase), growing from \$3.3 billion to an estimated \$6.8 billion in 2022–23.

Since 2012–13, significant developments in supporting the mental health of these groups include:

- establishing 13 YARN, the first national 24/7 crisis line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- continuing to invest in the 26-year world-renowned Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT), which supports culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities to seek help in times of distress or who are impacted by international crises and conflicts, and
- establishing an Indigenous-led network of aftercare and suicide prevention support, spanning across the country.

Supporting the social, emotional and mental health of Indigenous Australians

Closing the Gap Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The Australian Government is investing \$8.6 million to establish the *National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing* (Mental Health) to maintain momentum in reducing the devastating impact of mental ill-health and suicide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.

The Partnership will be co-led by a Coalition of Peak Organisations representative and the scope of the partnership will be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and state and territory governments.

Investing in the Red Dust Program

The Australian Government is investing \$8.5 million in the Red Dust Program to provide culturally appropriate mental health support in remote Northern Territory communities, focused on social and emotional wellbeing, sexual health, relationships, alcohol and other drugs, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Supporting the mental health of multicultural communities

Our Government is investing \$17.8 million to deliver targeted evidence-based mental health support to CALD communities in Australia, as part of our commitment to improving access to mental health care.

- \$10 million in a single year of top-up funding for PASTT, to continue to meet forecast demand for support to humanitarian entrants and survivors of torture and trauma.
- \$7.8 million to ensure Translating and Interpreting Services are available through Primary Health Network-commissioned mental health services, removing a significant barrier to accessing these services for CALD Australians.

Why is this important?

Supporting vulnerable Australians is one of the five pillars of the *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*. All Australians deserve to receive compassionate and effective mental care that meets their individual needs. To ensure equity in health outcomes, the Government is prioritising investment for vulnerable population groups.

The Government continues to work towards zero suicides, and has committed to a target of significant and sustained reduction in suicides of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience worse mental health outcomes than non-indigenous Australians, and continue to die by suicide at more than twice the rate of the overall population. There is a significant need to increase access to culturally appropriate mental health care and social and emotional wellbeing services in order to close the gap in health outcomes and life expectancy.

Australians from CALD backgrounds can also experience disproportionate levels of psychological distress and mental illness. More than one-third of humanitarian refugees experience high psychological distress, compared with less than 20% of the general population. As a result of factors such as poor health literacy and cultural and language barriers to accessing support, CALD communities also have poorer health outcomes than the general population. Providing tailored support to these communities is critical in ensuring that all Australians have the best opportunities to lead mentally healthy, contributing lives.

Who will benefit

The *National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing* as the primary policy partnership mechanism provides administrative efficiencies and will streamline consultations with states and territories and key Indigenous stakeholders.

The Partnership will drive actions for the next phase of mental health reform, building on the \$80 million investment in key initiatives in the 2021–22 Budget. Indigenous peak organisations and practitioners, mainstream organisations, and state and territory governments will all benefit. The ultimate beneficiaries will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

CALD communities will benefit from accessible and more targeted mental health services, access to translation services, and continued support for those who have experienced torture and trauma.

The Government's investment in mental health and primary health support will benefit individuals, families and communities in NSW and QLD directly affected by the flood disaster of 2022.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government is investing \$34.9 million over three years from 2022–23 to 2024–25.