

Improving Mental Health outcomes for Australians

**THE AUSTRALIAN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION
CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION**

Goals for Funding and Support from The Federal Government

presented by

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8 September 2022 - Parliament House Canberra

Parliamentary Advocacy Day



MAKE MENTAL HEALTH A PRIORITY

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WHY should we improve our mental health system?

**Because an investment in improved
mental health outcomes is an investment
in improved economic outcomes.**

The direct economic costs of mental illness and suicide in Australia are estimated at \$47-70 billion in 2018-2019.

The cost of disability and premature death due to mental ill-health, suicide and self-inflicted injury is equivalent to a further \$151 billion.

The cost of inaction addressing mental illness is high.



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WHAT should we improve in our mental health system?

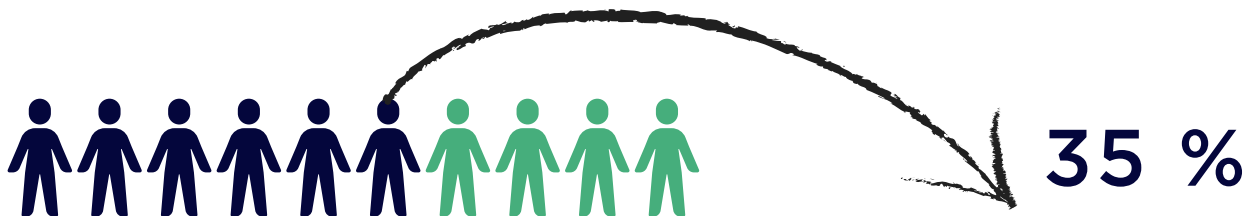
There is a strong current workforce shortage.

The growth of clinical psychologists has averaged 7% per year from 2018 to 2021. There is an estimated psychology workforce shortfall of 35%.

The National Skills Commission deems clinical psychology to have strong current shortage and strong future demand. Already our workforce is around 4,000 clinical psychologists short on planning targets and this increases waiting time for care for Australians.

There is significant geographical maldistribution of the psychology workforce with regional, rural and remote communities worst affected.

There are critical clinical psychology shortages in regional, rural and remote communities.



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HOW do we improve our mental health system?

We need to **increase** government support of training.

Calls to lower standards of training and care to address the shortfall are shortsighted, benefitting professionals over patients and creating disincentives to more training. It is critical that the mental health workforce is appropriately trained to provide high standards of care, leading to the best outcomes for Australians with mental illness, their families and the nation.

Clinical psychology training leads to clinicians with internationally recognised levels of expertise required for quality assessment and intervention for complex or enduring mental disorders. When governments don't adequately fund education of our mental health professionals, costs are shifted to students and fewer students from diverse backgrounds enter the workforce.

It's imperative our mental health workforce includes people from diverse backgrounds as their lived experiences can be extremely valuable. This includes students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and students who may have recently migrated to Australia.

We need to at least double the number of new post graduate psychology registrations in specialised areas annually from around 500 to 1000, looking to close the shortage of around 4,000 clinical psychologists as soon as possible.

Increasing postgraduate training places is the most efficient and effective way to grow the psychology workforce



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With all this in mind, we are calling for:

#1: **Prioritisation of Mental Health**

Prioritisation of mental health alongside physical health so postgraduate psychology study may have an urgent injection of funds to meet soaring demand among Australians.

#2: **Levels of funding**

Levels of funding for psychology postgraduate professional programs that cover the true costs of training, equivalent to the training of medical practitioners.

#3: **A doubling of places**

A doubling of places so that training capacity can meet workforce shortages within the next 5 (as opposed to 10) years.

#4: **Slashing student debt**

Slashing student debt for clinical psychologists who commit to work in rural and regional areas, so the mental health workforce is encouraged to head to the bush alongside doctors and nurses.

#5: **Clear and attractive pathways**

Clear and attractive career pathways within the public mental health sector, including paid registrar position that will provide the incentive for graduates to start their careers in the public sector.

#6: **Continuation of schemes supporting access**

Continuation of schemes supporting access to clinical psychologists such as Better Access and Open Arms that provide incentives for individuals to achieve high standards of training and service delivery through a 2-tier system.



About ACPA

The Australian Clinical Psychology Association (ACPA) is the only organisation in Australia that solely represents postgraduate trained clinical psychologists. Not all practitioners who are titled clinical psychologists in Australia have the accredited postgraduate training that is now the standard set by the Psychology Board of Australia. ACPA membership enables the public, government bodies, educational organisations and other health professionals to identify those clinical psychologists who have undertaken accredited postgraduate training in the specialty area of clinical psychology. Such training ensures that these clinical psychologists have advanced understanding of psychological disorders and mental health, and specialised knowledge and skills to assess and treat a wide variety of moderate to severe mental health conditions.

We strongly believe that mental health services in Australia can only benefit from us aiming for the highest training standards of our practitioners, that services provided should align to practitioner competencies, and that highly trained clinical psychologists are central in all future models of mental health services. It is the job of ACPA to lobby on behalf of the Australian public and our members to ensure that Government plans and policies are informed by these principles.

Professor Caroline Hunt
President, ACPA

Vision

Our vision is that every Australian has access to quality mental health care and that all Australian's can benefit from the expertise and high-quality service that clinical psychologists provide.

Mission

Our mission is to promote the role and the expertise of qualified clinical psychologists to the benefit of the Australian public, ACPA's members and the profession. We are committed to ensuring and advocating the highest training standards and the best practices for ongoing training and learning within clinical psychology. ACPA actively advances the recognition of clinical psychology as a clearly identifiable area of expertise.



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