

# Mind the gap: Shaping the mental health system for the people who need it most

## What is the issue?

Tasmania has the highest prevalence of people with mental health conditions in Australia. Many of these people also face poverty, unstable housing, and alcohol or drug use problems, but the current system isn't built to support those with complex needs.

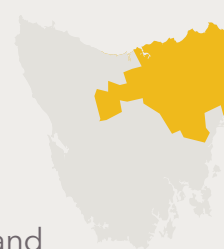
Drawing on information from frontline services, Anglicare Tasmania's **Mind the gap** report shows why many people with mental health conditions are struggling to access supports. It also considers the extent to which reforms underway will address these barriers.

**1 in every 2 Tasmanians** aged 16-85 report experiencing a mental health condition at some time in their life.<sup>1</sup>



**In Northern Tasmania,** access to mental health services is rated as being of very high concern.

The rating across the entire region is higher than in the South and North West of the state.<sup>2</sup>



## People living with mental health conditions are more likely to experience



**Low income**<sup>3</sup>



**Housing insecurity and homelessness**<sup>4</sup>



**Social isolation**<sup>5</sup>



**Poor physical health**<sup>6</sup>



**Alcohol and other drug use**<sup>7</sup>

1 ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) (2020-2022) *National study of mental health and wellbeing*, accessed August 2025.

2 Mental Health Australia and University of Canberra (2023) *Mapping mental health care*, accessed August 2025.

3 Isaacs AN, Enticott J and Inder B (2018) 'Lower income levels in Australia are strongly associated with elevated psychological distress: implications for healthcare and other policy areas', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10.3389/fpsy.2018.00536.

4 AHURI (Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute) (2019) *Understanding the links between mental health, housing and homelessness*, accessed August 2025.

5 AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2025) *Social isolation and loneliness*, accessed August 2025.

6 Scott D, Burke K, Williams S, Happell B, Canoy D and Ronan K (2012) 'Increased prevalence of chronic physical health disorders in Australians with diagnosed mental illness', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, doi: 10.1111/j.1753-6405.2012.00916.x.

7 ADF (Alcohol and Drug Foundation) (n.d.) *Alcohol and other drugs and mental health*, accessed August 2025.

## What our research found



We are not fitting services to people,  
we are fitting people into services

— Anglicare Community Services worker



### Gaps and barriers

In 2025, Anglicare's Social Action and Research Centre consulted with staff in Anglicare's Housing Services and Community Services to identify gaps in mental health services being experienced by clients.

The major themes that emerged were:

- the **fragmented service system**
- difficulties in **accessing and affording visits to GPs and psychologists**, including long wait times and limited bulk-billing options
- **negative experiences of crisis intervention**, including long wait times in the Emergency Department at the Launceston General Hospital and limited inpatient beds
- a **limited mental health workforce**, including under-resourcing of Statewide Mental Health Services
- the **lack of longer-term psychosocial support** outside the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- **service barriers for people with co-occurring mental health conditions and alcohol and other drug (AOD) use**
- **limited supported and transitional housing** options for people with mental health conditions.

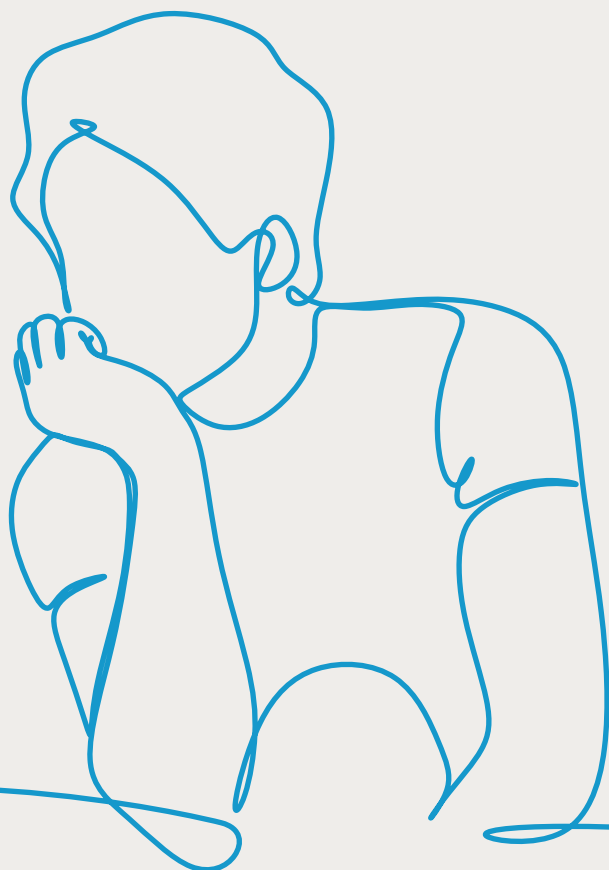
## Key points

- Mental health is impacted by experiences of disadvantage including low income, financial insecurity and housing instability. Tackling these issues directly contributes to prevention.
- People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and/or housing insecurity/homelessness. However, people with mental health conditions who are also experiencing AOD use and/or homelessness may struggle to get help from services designed to deal with only one of those issues.
- We need better-integrated services designed to support people with multiple and complex needs. Reform work towards an integrated mental health system is welcome. However, governments are urged to focus on key enablers such as health workforce and the way services are funded and commissioned.
- The gap in psychosocial supports outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) must be urgently addressed by governments. The resultant avoided costs such as hospital admissions are projected to reduce costs overall. This net financial saving is in addition to the benefits of better mental health outcomes.
- Improvements being made to the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) are welcome. However, more investment is needed in community-based mental health support and supported accommodation to reduce the need for hospital admissions.

## What needs to change?

To provide fair access to mental health care for all Tasmanians, we need to:

- provide suitable housing and a fair income for people
- address priority service gaps, including psychosocial supports and supports for people experiencing multiple issues
- improve the integration of the mental health care system and make mental health care more affordable with shorter waiting times.



The report recommends action by governments to deliver:

## Adequate income

- **Increase income support payments** above the Henderson Poverty Line

## Affordable mental health care

- **Expand GP bulk-billing** appointments in Tasmania
- **Provide affordable and bulk-billed psychology and psychiatry services**, including through the Medicare Mental Health Hub

## Housing

- **Invest in transitional and long-term supported accommodation** that is suitable for people with mental health conditions
- **Improve allocation processes** for social housing and supported accommodation
- **Scale up investment in long-term social housing**

## Integrated mental health system

- Continue **integrating the mental health system** and support effective stepped care
- Address unmet need for **psychosocial supports** outside the NDIS
- Deliver a **Tasmanian mental health workforce strategy**
- **Improve integration with other services**, including alcohol and other drug services and housing
- Support a **sustainable community services sector** through five-year contracts with adequate indexation

## Launceston General Hospital (LGH) Masterplan implementation

- Deliver the **LGH Mental Health Precinct and ED redesign**, ensuring that the needs of **people without a discharge address** will be met

**For detailed findings and client stories read the [full report](#).**

To request information or arrange a meeting, contact us:

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You can find out more about the [Social Action Research Centre](#) and access our online library of [Anglicare Tasmania research](#) by visiting [www.anglicare-tas.org.au](http://www.anglicare-tas.org.au)

