

**25/07/2023**

Mental Health Council of Tasmania Media Release

## **Tasmanians struggle to access affordable mental health supports**

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania has today released the second report as part of its Access and Affordability project. The report is informed by a series of community consultations held earlier this year, and a survey of over 400 people who access services across the state, as well as the friends, family and carers who support them.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said that the incredible number of people who shared their concerns through the survey and focus groups was a clear demonstration that Tasmanians are passionate about creating a mental health system in our state that give people access to the support they need, when and where they need it.

“It’s a privilege to be able to represent the voices of so many Tasmanians, and advocate with them for a mental health system in our state that is accessible and affordable for everyone. While this incredible level of engagement has been welcome, what we’ve heard from Tasmanians has unfortunately raised some serious concerns that our State and Federal Governments must do more to correct.”

The report highlights some concerning trends, with over 90% of respondents saying they had faced barriers to accessing necessary mental health supports for themselves or for the person they support. Of those barriers, the top four related to cost or availability. Shockingly, 60% of respondents said they had actually delayed accessing support due to cost in the last 12 months.

Ms Digolis said that more needed to be done to ensure that GPs, who often have long waiting lists and out-of-pocket costs involved, aren’t the only entry point into mental health support.

“Even if someone can afford to see their GP, and can get an appointment, this often puts them on a pathway to other supports that are just as difficult to access and afford. Everyone has different mental health needs, so instead of a one-size-fits all approach, we must open more avenues to support to improve access and increase affordability for all Tasmanians,” she said.

She said that a greater investment in community-based supports and services would not only cost less for individuals, and for our governments, they would also lead to better outcomes.

This latest report comes following a similar MHCT report last year, that highlighted concerns from the perspective of mental health service providers across the state.

That report showed that the cumulative impact of long-term underfunding is putting increasing strain on organisations that so many Tasmanians rely on to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Ms Digolis said, “These community organisations are funded under agreements with our State and Federal Governments. Many told us that they receive little to no indexation on their contracts. At the same time, they’ve had significant increases in staff and operational costs, as well as increasing demand for the various supports and services they provide. Without any meaningful increases in their funding, organisations are effectively being asked to do more with less.”

Ms Digolis highlighted the joint responsibility of State and Federal Government to ensure all Tasmanians have affordable access to the various services they needed to support their mental health and wellbeing.

The [full report](#) is available via the MHCT website [www.mhct.org](http://www.mhct.org)

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**Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide:**

A Tasmania Lifeline: 1800 984 434 [atasmanianlifeline.com.au/](http://atasmanianlifeline.com.au/)

Lifeline: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 [kidshelpline.com.au/](http://kidshelpline.com.au/)

**More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at:**

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>