



**Mental
Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA



**Take
a minute.**



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Making Prevention a Priority in Mental Health

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About Us

The [Mental Health Council of Tasmania](#) (MHCT) is the peak body representing the mental health and wellbeing needs of all Tasmanians, and the community organisations that work with and support them. We work closely with government to amplify the voices of our members and Tasmanian communities, to provide input into public policies and programs. We advocate for reform and improvement within the Tasmanian mental health system. Our purpose is to strengthen and advocate for our communities and service providers to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, and our vision is that every Tasmanian has access to the resources and support needed for good mental health and wellbeing.

Introduction

Prevention has long been a stated priority in mental health strategies around the world and in Tasmania. From the WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013–2030); Tasmania's Rethink 2020 strategy; Vision 2030 for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Australia and most recently, our state's discussion paper for a 20-year Preventive Health Strategy.

Turning goodwill into action has often proved elusive. The enablers either hard to find or put on the backburner in the scramble to respond to people in crisis.

MHCT believes our Take a minute campaign is one of those enablers. We also believe it can play a bigger role as Tasmania develops its next mental health strategy, negotiates a new Bilateral Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention with the Commonwealth in 2025 and embarks on a consultation process for the 20-year Preventive Health Strategy.

Some 4,000 Tasmanians have signed up to Take a minute since the premier launched the population-based campaign in November 2023. First funded by the government in 2022, Take a minute is designed to empower Tasmanians to take charge of their mental health and wellbeing. It's about understanding what good mental health and wellbeing looks like and the positive ways we can achieve it. The Take a minute initiative is at the heart of Tasmania's prevention and early intervention efforts on mental health. However, the Take a Minute campaign is scheduled to end 30 June 2025.

The Take a minute campaign is Tasmania's flagship initiative that appeals to our population's growing awareness of the importance of mental health and wellbeing. The campaign provides a positive psychological intervention via experiential education to raise the level of mental health literacy across our state and offers a unique approach by reaching into priority population groups, enabling greater community and workplace engagement and alternatives to digital participation.

With continued investment, MHCT plans to implement tailored Take a minute community campaigns in workplaces next year, as well as partner with community mental health and wellbeing activities and programs. With ongoing funding, Take a minute can become a critical component to prevention and early intervention activity within the next state mental health plan and the 20-year preventive health strategy. Additionally, with greater reach into communities, the Take a minute platform can be utilised to support raising community understanding of mental health reforms, levels of mental health care and the new Central Intake and Referral Service (CIRS).

Budget Priority	Investment
Continue investment in Take a minute campaign – central to Tasmania's prevention and early intervention efforts on mental health. Note: The Take a minute campaign is scheduled to end 30 June 2025.	\$3,500,000 over five years.

Prevention saves lives and is good value for money

Take a minute and its 7 minute challenge were developed by MHCT in partnership with Be Well Co, affiliated with the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. The campaign is a positive psychological intervention (PPI) designed to increase mental health literacy and raise awareness of how to recognise and maintain mental wellbeing. Its unique approach is to promote strengths and capacity building rather than identifying deficits or indicators of poor mental health.

A growing number of studies demonstrate that mental health is not merely the absence of mental illness, note the authors of a paper called *The Model for Sustainable Mental Health: Future Directions for Integrating Positive Psychology Into Mental Health Care*¹. Mental wellbeing represents a related but separate dimension of mental health. “Mental wellbeing reduces the risk of future incidence of mental illness and is highly valued by people receiving psychological treatment as an important aspect of personal and complete recovery and personal growth. This makes mental wellbeing a vital outcome of mental healthcare,” says the paper. Positive psychological interventions can increase mental wellbeing, add the authors. Such interventions aim to enhance resources that enable people to be resilient and flourish and can contribute to the decrease of dysfunctional processes underlying mental illness. This makes it important to better understand the mutual effects of PPIs and more traditional psychological interventions on both mental wellbeing and mental illness.²

“Prevention not only leads to better physical and mental health outcomes for generations to come. It also increases workforce and community participation and productivity,” said Guy Barnett, then Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing in the foreword to the Preventive Health Strategy discussion paper.

MHCT has now expanded the 7 minute challenge to cover all wellbeing domains and support increased engagement; developed and implemented a partnership program that supports increased reach/audience; expanded the Take a minute website to incorporate guidance for understanding and navigating mental ill-health including increased promotion of phone and low intensity supports; developed methodology that supports ongoing individual or group engagement with Take a minute and developed and implemented evaluation strategies that measure pre and post learning and behaviour change. See our interim evaluation report [here](#).

Take a minute translates international wellbeing research into action by inviting people to explore and define what concepts of wellbeing mean to them through quick and simple activities that are free and accessible to all Tasmanians. Through this approach, the Take a minute initiative has contributed to mental health reforms including Reform Direction 2: *A greater emphasis on promotion of positive mental health, prevention of mental health problems, and early intervention* and Reform Direction 6: *Getting in early and improving timely access to support (early in life and early in illness)* within Rethink 2020.

But more must be done to focus on prevention ‘upstream’ to help people maintain their mental health and wellbeing. Without addressing this our health system will continue to be overwhelmed.

Prevention saves lives and reduces illness and disability. It is also good value for money, notes the 20-year Preventive Health Strategy discussion paper. But preventive health can often be overlooked when responding to illness rather than prioritising approaches to health and wellbeing, adds the paper. Focus Area 4 of the discussion paper aims to strengthen prevention across the life course, including improving wellbeing and mental health as well as psychosocial supports.

MHCT recommends continued funding to enable the Take a minute campaign to play a central role in Tasmania’s 20-year Preventive Health Strategy, supporting the following outcomes:

- ▶ Keeping people well and connected to their daily environments through management of their health and wellbeing in the community
- ▶ Enhancing mental health and wellbeing through building upon Rethink 2020, The National Mental Health Commission’s Vision 2030 and the WHO’s Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013–2030)
- ▶ Promoting and normalising the use of mental health services to reduce stigma and encourage early intervention
- ▶ Promoting programs that strengthen social connectedness and resilience.

Empowering Tasmanians to access the support they need

With continued government investment, the Take a minute campaign can continue to grow our reach into Tasmanian communities and build on our existing 4,000 strong engagement. Such an investment will enable Take a minute to act as a critical and centralised function in communicating mental health reforms to all Tasmanians. Of major importance will be socialising Tasmanians to services that can assist them in determining what supports are most appropriate for their current needs and how to access them.

The bilateral mental health and suicide prevention agreement between the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments prioritises development of a single, statewide intake and assessment phone service so Tasmanians are referred to the service best able to meet their needs by utilising the Initial Assessment and Referral (IAR) tool to support warm referrals. The intention of the service is to support integration of all mental health services in Tasmania, offering a seamless care pathway for individuals into and between services.³ MHCT recognises the significant work and resources that both governments have invested to establish the Central Intake and Referral Service (CIRS). However, for this important service to succeed, community understanding and awareness must be a critical consideration.

Without communicating the benefits of the service and socialising Tasmanians to understand levels of mental healthcare, there is a real risk the CIRS won't be recognised as a trusted point of contact and will therefore be underutilised. This will result in the continued pattern of Tasmanians not receiving access to support sooner, reducing opportunities for early intervention and leaving people to sporadically attempt navigating the mental health system on their own with limited understanding of the best service to meet their needs.⁴

MHCT recommends the government continue to invest in Take a minute to enable the platform to promote and raise community awareness of the services designed to support service navigation and early intervention. Our communities understand mental health enough to take action, however, we now need to provide the responsive service they deserve. One that will reward them for reaching out by ensuring their needs are identified and action is taken. In addition, a centralised data point from which we can understand where people are requiring support and how the system can respond (or not) to individual and community needs is essential.

The proposed role of Take a minute in promotion and education of the CIRS and levels of care include:

- ▶ raise awareness of the CIRS to assist Tasmanians in navigating to the right support at the right time
- ▶ reduce stigma and build a community culture that values reaching out sooner rather than later for mental health supports
- ▶ ensure Tasmanians receive expert advice from a trusted source
- ▶ show there are options for support other than medical intervention
- ▶ build community trust in a process to determine appropriate care and support

As more Tasmanians engage with Take a minute, the platform will become a valuable pathway for further information and education, increasing confidence and trust in the government's mental health policies and ability to respond.

The next stage of Take a minute will also include/focus on:

- ▶ Monitoring, review, and continuous improvement to meet and further enhance campaign outcomes.
- ▶ Provide support to implement tailored community based (including in schools) and workplace Take a minute programs.
- ▶ Develop and implement strategies to extend engagement with Take a minute, including increasing social media activity.
- ▶ Continue to evaluate knowledge and behavioural changes around mental health literacy.
- ▶ Implement a workplace program that integrates Take a minute as a positive psychological intervention with psychological safety practices.
- ▶ Establish partnerships that integrate a positive psychological intervention with workplace and community mental health and wellbeing activities and programs.
- ▶ Explore options to further integrate Take a minute with other reform priorities.
- ▶ Consolidate data sources to measure impact e.g. increased referrals to lower intensity supports, uptake of calls to CIRS/Head to Health, increased engagement and understanding of positive psychological interventions.

References

¹ Bohlmeijer E and Westerhof G (2021) The Model for Sustainable Mental Health: Future Directions for Integrating Positive Psychology Into Mental Health Care. *Front. Psychol.* 12:747999.
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² Ibid

³ Tasmania's Bilateral Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention with the Commonwealth. 2022.
https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/sites/federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/files/2022-05/nmh_sp_bilateral_agreement_tas.PDF

⁴ Access and Affordability: Mental Health Services in Tasmania. Report 2 – Highlighting the experience of Tasmanians. Mental Health Council of Tasmania. 2023.
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