



# Health Minister Briefing:

## Community Mental Health - The Critical Solution to Queensland's Mental Health Crisis

May 2025

## Who QAMH Represents

QAMH's members are Mental Health Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), which provide evidence- *and* **community-based mental health support**, separate from hospitals, clinical settings and public outpatient community supports. Mental Health NGOs support people experiencing mental ill-health, their families, carers, and the broader community—helping them stay mentally well, connected with community, and ultimately **out of hospital**. These services offer **practical support** to people experiencing mental health challenges, focusing on **recovery, relationships, skills, and opportunities** for people to thrive – regardless of any ongoing diagnosis.

## What Community Mental Health Does

- ✓ Delivers evidence-based, recovery-focused support across the continuum, supporting Queenslanders with all levels of need – from mild to severe and complex.
- ✓ Complements hospital-based care by addressing psychosocial factors that significantly impact recovery and reduce hospital admissions.
- ✓ Helps people stay in their communities, workplaces, and families.

## Why This Matters

Queensland's health system is under extreme pressure and is not sufficiently caring for the increasing number of Queenslanders requiring support. The number of Australians presenting to Emergency Departments with a mental illness triaged as an emergency has more than doubled since 2011, and today, at least **92,100 Queenslanders are missing out on the psychosocial supports they need**<sup>1</sup>. Psychosocial supports are defined as individualised supports that create opportunities for people to better respond to their needs, such as social connection, relationships, self-care and economic participation. Adequate and accessible psychosocial supports improve **public health, economic productivity, and societal stability**.

Without action, more people will **fall through the cracks**, leading to crisis situations, emergency department visits, and hospital admissions that could have been prevented.

Despite this, Mental Health NGOs receive just **4.64% of Queensland's total mental health budget**<sup>2</sup>—one of the lowest shares in Australia. This figure does not include NDIS funding, which, while supporting some psychosocial needs, was never designed to replace core community mental health services. Its individualised model, eligibility barriers, and patchy implementation mean it cannot address the broader system gaps that community-based care is built to fill.

## What Needs to Happen?

**Queensland must increase investment in the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing NGO Sector** to meet demand and reduce hospital pressure. The Productivity Commission has recommended that **State and Commonwealth should share funding** for these services. Queensland should push for a 50/50 funding model at the next Health Ministers' Meeting.

## Why Investment is Logical and Critical

- ✓ The total economic cost of mental illness in Australia **exceeds \$70 billion annually**, and when factoring in the broader impacts, such as disability, lost productivity, and premature death, this figure **rises to over \$220 billion**<sup>3</sup>.
- ✓ Community mental health keeps mental health out of hospitals and clinics, freeing up beds, reducing ramping, and improving system flow.
- ✓ Community care is **far more cost-effective** than emergency or inpatient treatment and keeps people in the workforce, in community, and contributing to economic growth.
- ✓ **Investing** in mental health reforms, particularly those focused on services provided by community mental health organisations, **offers significant economic returns**. These reforms are projected to **save up to \$1.7 billion annually** and increase aggregate income by as much as \$1.3 billion per year. This is driven by addressing inefficiencies, reducing hospital admissions, and improving mental health outcomes across the system<sup>3,4</sup>

## Your Role & Next Steps

- ✓ Champion increased investment in community mental health — the missing piece in our system. We are seeking a 50/50 funding partnership between the State and Commonwealth Governments to close the \$511.5 million psychosocial support gap. The immediate request is a \$51.15 million commitment from Queensland in FY2025–26, matched by an equal Commonwealth investment, with a staged funding increase over five years.
- ✓ **Use this message:** *"I want to ensure Queenslanders get the right care, at the right time, in the right place—before they reach crisis point."*
  - For more information or to arrange a discussion, please contact QAMH Chief Executive Officer, Emily Wolter, on 0422 443 101 or at [ewolter@qamh.org.au](mailto:ewolter@qamh.org.au).

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<sup>1</sup> Health Policy Analysis. (2024). Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial supports outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme – Final Report. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2025). Mental health expenditure. AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/mental-health/topic-areas/expenditure>

<sup>3</sup> Productivity Commission. (2020). Mental health (Report No. 95). Canberra, ACT: Author. <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report>

<sup>4</sup> KPMG and Mental Health Australia. (2018). Investing to Save: The Economic Benefits for Australia of Investment in Mental Health Reform. <https://mhaustralia.org/publication/investing-save-kpmg-and-mental-health-australia-report-may-2018>