

## Mental Health Statement

Relationships Australia is committed to social justice and inclusion, and respects the rights of all people, in all their diversity, to live with dignity and safety, and to enjoy healthy relationships. Relationships Australia has been a provider of family relationships counselling, dispute resolution and associated services for more than 60 years. Relationships Australia works with many clients who experience poor mental health, and supports families who have members with mental health issues. Relationships Australia provides services within the country's allied mental health sector.

### Relationships Australia believes that...

- people affected by poor mental health are vulnerable and in need of support if they are to lead safe and fulfilled lives.
- healthy relationships can promote mental well-being, just as unhealthy relationships can create and exacerbate mental health problems.
- families, especially the children, of people with poor mental health need support.
- the community sector plays a vital role in prevention and early intervention work in the area of mental health.
- collaboration within and across the non-government sector and government departments is essential as many people experiencing mental health problems are also dealing with insecure housing, employment, addiction, relationship and financial issues.
- long-term, ongoing financial and practical assistance needs to be available for those experiencing chronic mental illness, and for their family members.
- governments and service providers need to consult and work with consumer, advocacy and self-help groups in order to provide a broad range of effective mental health services.

### Relationships Australia supports...

- a whole of government approach to mental health, as set out in the Fourth National Mental Health Plan.
- the implementation of priority areas for action identified in the Fourth National Mental Health Plan.
- collaborative government-community sector sharing of evidence, resources and skills to develop effective programs to build mental health resilience in the community and to support people living with poor mental health.
- prevention and early intervention approaches to mental well-being, including the provision of services to children and young people.
- greater community understanding of, and efforts to, de-stigmatise mental illness through community education programs.
- building literacy around mental health. This helps clients and the community to understand mental health and mental illness, and assists people to navigate the mental health and allied mental health systems to find appropriate services and support.

- a 'no wrong door' integrated support system that ensures those in need of assistance do not fall between the gaps and do not have to repeat their story to each service provider with whom they have contact.
- targeted, well-resourced interventions for some identified at-risk groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, humanitarian entrants, people with a dual-diagnosis of mental health and drug/alcohol issues, people who have experienced family and domestic violence, people experiencing homelessness, women in the peri-natal period, people in prison and children of parents with a mental illness.
- Beyondblue, Headspace, Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and similar organisations in their efforts to educate and support the community and individuals about mental health.

## Relationships Australia is committed to ...

- working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal people experience higher rates of depression than non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal mental health and well-being needs to be considered in the context of Australian history and social change and the holistic view of health and well-being traditionally taken by Aboriginal people.
- working with culturally and linguistically diverse people who face many barriers to accessing services.
- supporting healthy family relationships through relationship education, counselling, family dispute resolution and family support programs.
- working directly with children, young people and their families to offer support and help develop resilience. Estimates suggest that approximately 23% of Australian children and young people live with at least one parent with a mental illness.
- supporting healthy communities and workplaces through mentoring programs, community development projects and employee assistance programs.
- working collaboratively with government and non-government agencies to provide case-managed, wraparound services tailored to meet the unique needs of each client.
- working in rural and remote areas to assist individuals, families and communities whose mental health is often disadvantaged by where they live and the economic and social circumstances related to remote and rural living.
- supporting women and children affected by domestic and family violence, as safety and a life free from violence are fundamental to good mental health.
- ensuring that financial and social disadvantage do not prevent people from accessing appropriate services.
- having a skilled workforce, open to working flexibly and in innovative ways to meet the needs of their clients.

Relationships Australia's experience puts it in an excellent position to make an informed, evidence-based contribution to public policy development in the area of allied mental health, and to use its voice for the many Australians affected by mental health problems.