

# Mental Health

## What is Mental Health?

Good mental health is fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals, their families, and the whole population. Conversely, mental health problems and mental illness are among the greatest causes of disability, diminished quality of life, and reduced productivity. People affected by mental health problems often have high levels of morbidity and mortality, experiencing poorer general health and higher rates of death from a range of causes, including suicide. These conditions are significant in terms of prevalence and disease burden, and have far-reaching impacts for families, carers and others in the community.

## Mental Health — the facts:

- One in five Australians experiences a mental illness within a 12-month period.
- In 2007, almost half (45%) of all Australians had experienced a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime.
- Depression is the fourth most common problem managed in general practice, according to data on GP activity for 2004-05.
- Mental health disorders are the third leading cause of the non-fatal burden of disease and injury in Australia.
- The World Health Organisation estimates that depression will be the number one cause of disability in both the developed and developing worlds by 2030.
- The prevalence of mental health disorders is highest among people who are separated or divorced, and lowest among those who are married.
- While the precise rates of depression and anxiety in older people are not yet known, a recent study commissioned by beyondblue suggests between 10-15% of older people living in the community experience depression symptoms. Rates of depression in residential aged care facilities are thought to be much higher, with a recent Australian study showing 34.7% of aged care residents suffering from depression.

## Who does Anglicare help?

- People of all ages, cultures and backgrounds facing mental health challenges

## How does Anglicare help?

Anglicare SA has a number of programs that support people living with or affected by mental illness, including:

**The Archway** provides rehabilitation and day programs for people presenting with co-morbidity issues (drug and/or alcohol misuse and mental illness)

**Personal Helpers and Mentors** provides an individual support program for those living in the community with mental illness

**Mental Health Respite for Older Carers** provides support to carers and care recipients who are mental health consumers through one to one support and group activity.

**Exceptional Needs Program** is a “no retreat” psychosocial support program for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who have high and complex needs.

**Church Pulgi** is an activity based recreation centre for people with exceptional needs who may not fit into mainstream activity.

**Other Community Outreach** programs (Boarding House Outreach, Supported Residential Facilities and others) that provide case management, one to one support and a range of group activities aimed at developing living skills and building quality of life.

**Staying Attached** is a service for women suffering from and at risk of post-natal depression, and their children.

**Loss & Grief Centre** offers counselling, group programs, seminars and workshops dealing specifically with grief and loss.

**Star Bear**, a program for bereaved children.

**Living Beyond Suicide** offers support for relatives and friends after a loved one's suicide.

## Case study

Suzie joined our **Personal Helpers and Mentors** program in 2008. Her mental health problems meant that she was socially isolated and had difficulty functioning in the community. Through her commitment and engagement in her recovery Suzie has taken control of her treatment, recognising signs of becoming unwell and developing strategies to help herself. Suzie has friendships in her local areas and takes care of herself through positive self-talk, relaxation and breathing techniques. Suzie has been able to provide peer support to others who are living with mental health issues.

Note: Recovery means learning to live a positive and fulfilling life while living with mental illness. It is not necessarily about "cure".

## Position statement

Anglicare acknowledges and actively promotes the right of all people to lead positive and fulfilling lives which includes actively participating in the community. Anglicare's contribution to promoting good mental health through providing programs and supports for those facing mental health challenges or those facing loss and grief in direct response to their needs, and actively promoting better community understanding of those with mental illness, are central planks of Anglicare's response to upholding this right.

## The challenges

- More supports – are needed for community programs focused on early intervention and prevention.
- Reducing stigmatisation – We need to change community attitudes towards mental illness through ongoing education and promoting understanding and responsibility. Stigmatisation only leads to greater isolation and exacerbates the problem for many people living with mental illness.
- Lack of appropriate facilities – There is a need for more medical services appropriate to the needs of people with more severe mental illness who need specialist care.
- Social Inclusion – There is a need for more community involvement and programs that enable people with mental health challenges to feel a part of their local community.

## Anglicare and Advocacy:

Anglicare SA speaks out on issues affecting people with mental health challenges through participation in the following organisations:

- Mental Health Coalition of SA
- Shelter SA
- SACOSS

## How you can help?

- Volunteering to help in one of our programs
- If you are interested in becoming involved in Anglicare's advocacy work, contact us

### Sources:

Black Dog Institute - <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au>

Beyond Blue - <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Mental Health in Australia – A Snapshot 2004-2005, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4824.0.55.001/>

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### For more information

Contact Jacqui

18 King William Rd, North Adelaide, SA, 5006

Tel 8305 9281 [advocacy@anglicare-sa.org.au](mailto:advocacy@anglicare-sa.org.au) [www.anglicare-sa.org.au](http://www.anglicare-sa.org.au)