

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION 2025



Joint statement on youth mental health priorities

The mental health of young Australians has been declining for over two decades, driven by key factors such as housing insecurity, precarious employment, rising student debt, global crises, and climate change uncertainty [1]. With almost two in five young Australians experiencing mental health issues [2], urgent action is needed to address this growing crisis in the upcoming federal election.

Access to education and meaningful workforce participation is essential for young people experiencing mental ill-health. Young people also need readily available mental health support that is designed to meet their needs and help-seeking preferences. However, the cost of mental health support remains a major barrier, with 60 per cent of young people aged 18-24 identifying cost as a significant barrier to accessing mental health support in 2024 [3].

We have been in a youth mental health crisis for years, exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19 and the rising cost of living. Public support for action is clear: 80 per cent of Australian voters believe the government must do more to tackle rising youth mental health issues, and 70 per cent say it should be a higher priority for the next Australian government. Notably, 75 per cent of voters support increasing funding for youth mental health, even if it means reallocating resources from other areas [4]. This support transcends partisanship [5].

On 27 February, Mental Health Australia launched their Federal Election Platform which urged all political parties to commit to implement pathways to free mental health care for everyone under the age of 25.



Key youth mental health sector organisations – [Orygen](#), [headspace](#), [batyr](#), [ReachOut Australia](#), [Prevention United](#), [Black Dog Institute](#), [ARACY](#), [Youth Focus](#), [yourtown](#) and [Mission Australia](#) – support Mental Health Australia’s **call for free mental health care for all children and young people**, and have identified key areas for urgent reform and investment in mental health to address this crisis. We are eager to work with the next federal government to build a stronger youth mental health system through the following priorities:

- provide **free access** to mental health care for all children and young people. This includes:
 - free access to a range of supports including community-based support, peer-to-peer, prevention, early intervention and postvention;
 - sustainable funding for child and youth mental health services, including headspace centres, to boost service capacity, retain staff and give more young people access to the support they need;
 - increased access to support services for families and allies who play a vital role in supporting young people experiencing mental health challenges; and
 - increased access to culturally safe and appropriate mental health and suicide prevention initiatives for all young people, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people through initiatives designed and led by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.
- address the system’s missing middle by building a level of care for more specialist support to ensure all young people with more serious and complex mental health needs have access to mental health services.
- build stronger links across youth mental health care by:
 - investing in service integration, between levels of clinical services and between clinical services and social supports, and
 - improving access to and sharing of youth mental health service data.
- ensure that our youth mental health system is ready to meet demand now and into the future by:
 - developing and retaining a skilled child and youth mental health workforce through positive training and early career experiences, particularly in regional, rural, outer metro and community settings; and
 - investing in digital mental health service capacity, that provides accessible 24/7 support, as well as leveraging AI and emerging technologies to expand innovative, evidence-based online free mental health supports.
- increase funding for mental health promotion and prevention, including:
 - full implementation of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy; and
 - quarantining a proportion of the mental health budget for mental health promotion and prevention as a pathway to achieving the [National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030](#).
- prioritise the health and wellbeing of young people in implementing new social media regulations by collaborating with the youth mental health sector to develop measures such as access to safe and supportive online spaces.

[1] McGorry PD, Mei C, Dalal N, Alvarez-Jimenez M, Blakemore S-J, Browne V, et al. The Lancet Psychiatry Commission on youth mental health. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. 2024;11(9):731-74.
[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary Results, 2020–2022. 2023.
[3] Black Dog Institute. Navigating Australia’s mental health system in 2024 - Consumer Report. September 2024.
[4] YouGov. Sentiment of Australians on youth mental health 2025. Results of a national omnibus Orygen/YouGov Poll. March 2025.
[5] Redbridge. Voters’ attitudes towards mental health policy: Prepared for Mental Health Australia. December 2024.

