**SHARE SUNDAY 2021**

**Sunday 10th October**

**All are welcome.**

**Focus on Mental Health**

**1. Introduction**

Share Sunday is an opportunity for the whole of the Uniting Church to celebrate the incredible community services being undertaken by our agencies, parish missions, presbyteries and congregations. It is also an invitation to continue to explore how we can partner together as we respond to Christ’s calling to serve humanity seeking to create an inclusive, connected and just world.

This year, the focus of our Share Sunday resources is **mental health**, around the theme of **‘All are welcome.’**

These resources include a complete sample service, with all prayers and responses, sermon/reflection, intergenerational activity resources & suggested hymns. An additional PowerPoint with the complete service and some powerful video reflections accompanies this resource for those congregations who use data projection in worship. These resources are available to download, but not in hard copy. However, if you are unable to download them, you may request a USB memory stick to be posted to you. Please adapt the material to suit your context and congregation(s).

This year’s occasion might be the time to invite some local Uniting staff, board members or volunteers along to be present in worship. If you need a local contact to extend such an invitation, please let Deborah Grace Loh know: E: Deborah.Loh@vt.uniting.org.

As we pray, reflect and worship together as part of our Share Sunday services, we can continue to build on the rich history of Share, and the incredible contributions we as a church community make to improving the lives of many in our communities going through tough times. Thank you for participating.

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**2. Sample Worship Service**

Based upon the lectionary scripture readings for Sunday 10th October, Pentecost 20.

Job 23:1-9,16-17

Psalm 22:1-15

*(The following readings are not used in this liturgy)*

Hebrews 4:12-16

Mark 10:17-31

(These resources could be used on other Sundays or times of worship if departing from the lectionary is permissible in your context.)

**Acknowledgment of Country**

*According to your local custom.*

**Call to Worship**

*(We gather together as the people of God)*

The words from Psalm 22 pierce our memories when we recall when we last heard them - on Jesus’ lips on the cross... “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” There are times when we cry by day, believing that you do not answer, when our fears keep us awake at night. Then we remember that our ancestors trusted in you, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

Let us worship God with trusting hearts.

**Opening Hymn**

 *(Some suggestions)*

 TIS 100 All creatures of our God and King

 TIS 111 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation

 TIS 153 God is Love

 TIS 223 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

**Greeting**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**Welcome & Introduction to the Share Sunday theme**

Share Sunday is an opportunity for the whole of the Uniting Church to celebrate the incredible community services being undertaken by our agencies, parish missions, presbyteries and congregations. It is also an invitation to continue to explore how we can partner together as we respond to Christ’s calling to serve humanity seeking to create an inclusive, connected and just world. Today our theme is “All are welcome” with a focus on mental health.

**Announcements/News**

(or your usual place in the service)

**Opening Prayer**

Loving God,

We gather on this Share Sunday,

to lift mental illness out of the shadows and into the light.

To talk openly about things that are often whispered,

if they are talked about at all,

and to confront the stigma that keeps people from dealing honestly

with matters that are more common than we might care to acknowledge.

Bless us with determination and persistence,

as we strive to create safe space in our congregation for all people,

including those dealing with mental health challenges,

whether fleeting or lasting.

Realizing that “they” are “us,” help us forge a path forward, together,

toward a way of being that highlights empathy, compassion,

and care for all your children.

And give us courage and wisdom to keep the conversation alive,

and to make it meaningful and helpful.

We ask this in the name of the One who loves us all,

no matter who we are

or where we are on life’s journey.

**Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession**

Let us pray:**Merciful God,**

**our maker and our judge,we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed:we have not loved you with our whole heart,we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.Father, forgive us.Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Declaration of Forgiveness**

Hear the Good News:

No valley is too despairing, broken, or dusty for God to enter in.

No fear, no chaos, no hopelessness is beyond the reach

of the One whose breath gives us life.

**Through Christ, God sees only our wholeness.**

**Through Christ, forgiveness, love, and new life are always possible.**

Come, Holy Spirit, come. Make all things new.

**We are reclaimed and remade by the Spirit of Life.**

**In our brokenness and in our wholeness,**

**we are God’s beloved.**

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

*(if your congregation passes the peace, continue with:*

**The Peace**

The peace of the Lord be always with you

**And also with you.**

*and invite people to exchange a sign of peace with one another)*

**Scripture Readings**

Job 23:1-9,16-17

Psalm 22:1-15

**Sharing Together** (Early Word & Activity)

This an opportunity for an intergenerational activity and conversation around the Question

**“What does a welcoming place look like to you?”**

**Set the context**- Job and the Psalmist are having a difficult stage of their lives in which they feel alienated from God. We all have times in our lives when we feel alienated from others and yet God promises us a place of welcome.

Hand out the **Activity Sheet provided in resource pack** and encourage everyone to work together in pairs/small groups to complete the activity sheet. Encourage a mix of generations.

Invite contributions in words, drawings, sculpture, mime!

Share in small groups and report back to whole gathering if appropriate.

Another question for reflection:

**What might be some of the challenges be if you have poor mental health?**

Close with prayers of thanks for the blessing of places of welcome like the church and a hope that all people will find welcoming places to belong.

**Thanksgiving Hymn**

(some suggestions)

TIS 107 Sing praise and thanksgiving

TIS 256 This is our God, the servant King

TIS 607 Make me a channel of your peace

TIS 727 In the presence of your people

If today’s theme stirs something for you, you may choose to talk with someone you trust, an elder, your minister or refer to one of these help lines

**COMMUNITY SUPPORTS**

Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) 13 14 11

Beyond Blue [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) 1300 224636

Kids Helpline [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) 1800 551800

MensLine [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au) 1300 789978

Open Arms [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au) 1800 011046 (Defence Forces)

Butterfly Foundation [www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au) 1800 334673 (Eating Disorders)

**Sermon/Reflection**

*There are some sermon/reflection in the resources pack (below) for the core reflection time, including some information on current statistics, two compelling video reflections from people with a diagnosed mental health issue who have experienced marginalization and places of welcome.*

Affirmation of Faith

We say together our affirmation of faith.

We believe in one God, Creator, Word, and Spirit.
We believe in God above us,
Maker and sustainer of all life,
Of sun and moon, of water and earth, of male and female.

We believe in God beside us,
Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,
Born of a woman's womb, servant of the poor.
He was tortured and nailed to a tree.
A man of sorrows, He died forsaken.
He descended into earth to the place of death.
On the third day He rose from the tomb.
He ascended into heaven to be everywhere present,
And His kingdom will come on earth.

We believe in God within us,
The Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
Life-giving breath of the church,
Spirit of healing and forgiveness,
Source of resurrection and life everlasting. Amen.

**Hymn**

*(some suggestions)*

 TIS 123 Be still my soul

 TIS 647 Comfort, Comfort, all my people

TIS 658 I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry

TIS 690 Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair

**Offering**

God seeks to bind us together,

to shape and reshape us into the church the world so desperately needs.

Jesus has shown us how to love one another, without fear, without judgment.

The Spirit empowers us to shatter stigma and embrace all God’s people.

With hearts filled with gratitude and grace,

let us give as generously as we have been blessed.

**Offering Prayer**

**Sophia God, may the Spirit never stop churning**

**and turning our comfort into justice-seeking unrest.**

**We come before you, drawn by the power of your breath,**

**offering you our gifts and our very selves**

**that you may continue to build your Body,**

**one person at a time, until all know the joy of being your Beloved.**

**Amen.**

**Prayers of the People, concluding with the Lord’s Prayer**

**(Adapted from Bruce Prewer)**

Let us pray for the world, our community and for those in need.

Holy friend, we thank you for the compassion you have placed within our hearts, for our ability to empathise with those who days are fraught with struggle and pain. If the magnitude of the world’s needs seem overwhelming, save us from closing our minds and hardening our hearts. Let us put our trust always in you.

We pray for those who sufferings seem to be the result of their own folly or sin. Those who try our patience and maybe offend our sensibilities. Please bless them, with our help or without it, as you think best, for you understand them with a love which never wearies.

We pray for those whose misery is the result of the wilfulness and sin of others. The victims of hatred and violence, war and persecution, crime and apathy, greed and exploitation, road rage, or drugs and alcohol. Please bless them, with our help or without it, according to your overriding wisdom and love.

We pray for those who are on the front line in serving others. Police officers and social workers, overseas aid workers and peace keepers, nurses and doctors, ambulance officers and counsellors, pharmacists and parents, teachers and magistrates. Please bless them, with our help or without it, that they may be kept from chronic weariness or cynicism.

We pray for those who work hard to keep the church wide open, both to the Gospel and to the world’s needs. Committee members and hospital visitors, secretaries and editors of church newspapers, theologians and treasurers, parish ministers and evangelists, youth workers and street priests, denominational leaders and social justice campaigners. Please bless them, with our help or without it, that the witness to the word and way of Christ may never be dimmed.

We pray for those among us who feel burdened or distressed today. Any who are dealing with bad news, poor health, tense relationships, suffering, sorrow or any other hardship. Please bless them, with or without our help, that they may find the extra resources and guidance that they need.

On this Share Sunday 2021, we particularly pray for all who experience issues with their mental health and those who struggle with the attached stigma and marginalisation.

May our church communities be places of welcome as Jesus showed us was possible.

Be with all who support them and grant us all your peace, acceptance and love.

Most holy Friend, we thank you that our prayers are heard before we even express them. May our deeds embody our prayers, and our prayers become more aware because of our deeds. Through Christ Jesus our teacher and liberator.

**Amen!**

We pray together our shared hope in the words of the The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father in heaven**

**hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours**

**now and forever.**

**Amen.**

**Closing Hymn**

*(Some suggestions)*

TIS 189 Glory to our boundless God

TIS 439 What shall we offer our good Lord

TIS 630 The law of Christ alone can make us free

TIS 571 Forth in thy name

**Word of Mission & Blessing**

Gathered, renewed, nourished and inspired in the love of the God who is always with us,

**We are now sent out to love and to serve.**

Go, daring to share who you are, what you have, and what you dare to dream, for the healing and transformation of our world.

In the name of Christ.

**Amen.**

May the God of grace that says “you are not alone” encourage you.

May the God of mercy that says “you are enough” comfort you.

May the God of love that says “you are loved” embrace you this day and every day.

**Amen**.

**Blessing Song**

*(Some suggestions)*

TIS 779 May the feet of God walk with you

TIS 780 May light come into your eyes

TIS 781 Father, bless us as we go

**3. Activity Sheet – What does being welcome mean to you?**

Share Sunday 2021-Activity

**What does being welcome mean to you?**



Draw, paint, write your responses here, then SHARE with others 😊

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**4. Sample sermon/reflection:**

*How shall I sing to God
when life is filled with bleakness,
empty and chill,
breaking my will?
I'll sing through my pain,
angrily or aching,
crying or complaining.
This is my song;
I'll sing it with love.*

These are the poetic words from Bryan Wren the hymn writer.

They speak of the difficulties in life and how in the midst of trauma, grief and suffering we might address the mystery of God in our pain.

We have all lived or a living with some of this pain and suffering, it appears to be part of the human condition! It comes in the death of a loved one, a relationship break down, loss of a job, sudden illness or injury, the loss of a dream. I wonder what holds those memories of pain and suffering for you?

I wonder also if you had well-meaning Christian friends who have come and said your suffering has happened due to God’s judgement and that you need to repent of your obvious sin? You must have done something to anger God!

It is a particular view of God which is not very helpful and is in fact detrimental to your mental and spiritual health.

However, scripture is full of difficult stories, and this is the place we find Job in today. In earlier chapters we are introduced to Job who is a blameless and upright man with a large family and many possessions. In the preceding 22 chapters, we find God has allowed the devil to test and taunt Job. He has lost his possessions and many of his family members and yet he does not blame God but rather laments.

Over several chapters his so called three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, challenge him and link his suffering to Job’s sin they feel must have brought it on. Job’s responses grow shorter and more desperate. In his third cycle of rhetoric against Job in chapter 22 we find Eliphaz claims “there is no end to your iniquities”. Eliphaz lacks wisdom as we will see at the end of the book.

This passage reminds us of the human tendency (embodied by Job’s friends) to seek for a cause for suffering. Seeing a link between those who suffer and their purported sinfulness can be a way of giving the observer an unwarranted sense of being insulated from the possibility of suffering.

Job’s frustration in not being able to find or feel God’s presence in a dark time allows us to explore how faith attempts to keep alive an assurance of God’s presence even when God seems far removed. The link with Psalm 22 which Jesus quoted from the cross in the cry of dereliction is “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”. For us as Christians it is on the cross, in the place of godlessness and no hope, paradoxically the presence and power of God is revealed to the world.

When I hear the words of Job and the Psalmist, I also recall the voices of many in our community who suffer from some form of a mental health disorder. In the struggle to understand their experience and deal with the stigma within society, they often feel very isolated, marginalised and alone. Some even cry out to God in pain like Jesus and the Psalmist, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”.

Unfortunately, many people who suffer a mental health disorder find it difficult to remain connected within their families and communities and this includes faith communities. Historically we have a terrible record, including poor theology, that scapegoats them by attributing some hidden personal sin. Thankfully that view is changing in many faith circles, but the mainstream stigma still remains and we as a faith community have much more work to do, to be safe places of inclusion.

Over the course of the COVID pandemic, Australian society is becoming increasing aware and accepting of mental health disorders. Certainly, children in school today are made much more aware of issues like ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), anxiety and depression.

This should not be a surprise as the statistics tell us about the world we live in today:

* 1 in 3 of us in Australia will suffer from some form of mental health issue in our lifetime?
	+ Due to under reporting it is estimated to actually be 1 in 2 (46%).
* 1 in 5 Australian’s will have experienced a mental health disorder in the last 12 months.
	+ The most common being anxiety, depression, and substance use disorders.
* 1 in 7 will experience depression in their lifetime.
* 1 in 4 will experience an anxiety condition in their lifetime.
* 1 in 16 Australians is currently experiencing depression.
* 1 in 7 children aged 4-17 will have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder in the last 12 months.
	+ The 4 most common being ADHT, Anxiety, Depression and Conduct Disorders.
* For children, males have a higher rate of diagnosis over females at a rate of 4:3.
* In 2019/20
	+ **40.7 million** mental health-related medications (subsidised and under co-payment) were dispensed.
	+ **4.4 million patients (17.2% of the Australian population)** filled a prescription for a mental health-related medication with an average of 9.2 prescriptions per patient.
	+ **72.1%** of mental health-related prescriptions filled were for Antidepressant medications.

We shouldn’t be overwhelmed by these statistics but it does give some helpful perspective. It does mean that there will be many people listening to this reflection today who have or are experiencing poor mental health. Most likely we will all know someone who is affected.

The ongoing challenge is to remove the stigma associated surrounding mental health disorders with ongoing education, open conversation and acceptance. Many still fear being rejected or categorised and treated differently. This is true in families, in community groups and in the workplace.

In recent years RUOK day (which this year is on 9th September) has been a good program for recognising and accepting we all struggle at times and the need to reach out to those we trust.

Within Uniting we are greatly aware of mental health issues across every sector we work in from early learning to integrated family services, family violence to emergency relief, homelessness to employment services, community aged care to disability services. We also have focussed programs for those with a mental health disorder such as Voices Vic, NDIS Support Coordination, our mental health hub in St Kilda and Lifeline in Melbourne and Ballarat.

Please listen to some beautiful stories of what can happen when we see beyond overwhelming statistics; when we see, listen, understand and stand in solidarity with people experiencing mental health issues.

*[Choose a story or 2 from those provided in the next section]*

With both Job and the Psalmist, we paradoxically find God when we engage in both our own suffering and in the suffering of others, including those with mental health issues. For us as Christians we identify with Jesus suffering on the cross that paradoxically on the cross of godlessness in which Jesus was abandoned, the love, grace and power of God is revealed. And so, as followers of Jesus Christ we are granted the generous gift of God’s transformative love to share with the world. We live life as disciples and offer ourselves to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in humble worship, witness and service, to create a safe, inclusive and just world.

Amen.

**5. Mental Health Stories:**

**Tamara**

*(\* Name changed to protect identity)*

Tamara\* was working as an enrolled nurse when her mother passed away interstate.

During the process of grieving and organising her mother’s funeral, Tamara stopped taking her mediation for schizophrenia, a disorder that affects a person's ability to think, feel and behave clearly. This led to Tamara experiencing financial hardship and she was forced to sleep in her car for a prolonged period of time.

Tamara presented to a Uniting housing entry point and was referred to a rooming house, for more secure accommodation. Tamara stayed at the rooming house whilst she stabilised her mental health after she was linked into a local mental health services by the team at Uniting. The Housing Ready team was then able to support Tamara with interview preparation, and she found employment as a casual kitchen hand.

The team then worked with Tamara around budgeting and living skills. Together they found appropriate properties to apply for, discussed how to speak to agents over the phone, how to make a good impression at housing inspections, and how to complete paperwork to apply for rentals. Tamara was then approved for a rental in a shared house and now secured permanent part time employment.

Tamara has stabilised her financial and housing situation thanks to the support of Uniting, which in turn has enabled her to stabilise her mental health.

**Bradley**

*(\* Name changed to protect identity)*

Bradley\* had been experiencing debilitating bouts of diagnosed depression and anxiety as well as obsessive compulsive behaviours for many years and has been unable to hold down work as a result.

His doctor recommended he attend the St Kilda 101 Engagement Hub.

Without knowing what to expect, Bradley made his way to the Engagement Hub during their Christmas Drop-In celebrations back in 2010.

He met others who could relate to his experiences with mental health concerns, and it reminded him that he was not alone.

While there, he also found out more about the different classes and workshops the Engagement Hub offered, and decided he wanted to see what they were like.

From that day, Bradley has been able to enjoy the friendships he’s built over the years, as well as the delicious food, and all the programs on offer.

He enjoys yoga classes, and has also tried his hand at singing, drama and writing classes.

“For some of us experiencing mental health concerns, our goal is just to stabilise. Just keep our heads above water,” says Bradley.

“Being here every week, we’re treated with real respect. We’re reminded that we are capable of doing things, we have the chance to learn and engage.

“I think, if we couldn’t come here, a lot of us would deteriorate…When we come here and connect with one another, we are reminded how important community is. And it’s because of the support of this team and their programs that we can manage better in our everyday life.”

\*Name changed to protect identity.

**Paul**

*(Name used with permission)*

Social isolation is a crippling feeling.

Paul Camilleri knows this all too well.

Diagnosed with bipolar in 2001, Paul has battled the stigma attached with mental health for most of his life.

“I’ve always felt a bit different than other people,” Paul said.

“I was bullied a lot at school. And I was the outcast in my family growing up.

“And this caused tension, which came across as disappointment.

“After my diagnosis, people stopped reaching out.

“I used to go out walking my dog just to interact with others,” he added.

At his lowest, Paul found himself homeless, living in a friend’s shed for seven months.

Bad financial decisions and a workplace injury left him with little savings and income.

After reaching out for support, Paul was placed in transitional housing.

He has since found a public housing property and has used Uniting services to connect with people in his community.

Now the 54-year-old is turning his attention to helping others.

“I’m the best I’ve been ever,” he said.

“I’ve developed a newfound confidence and I’ve realised that I’ve got a voice and if I speak up, hopefully I can help others.”

Paul recently completed a course in public speaking.

When Paul was approached to speak at the Uniting Vic.Tas Winter Breakfast in May 2019, he didn’t hesitate.

“I’d like to be a stigma warrior and break down some of the barriers people face because of mental illness or disability,” he said.

“Everyone has a place and deserves to feel like they belong.”

**Luke**

*(\* Name changed to protect identity)*

As a voice hearer, Luke\* found it difficult to engage with others.

He would spend a lot of time isolated and at home, in a rooming house.

While Luke has a quiet and calm disposition, he had found it difficult to make new and long-lasting friendships, except for the friendship with his brother, who she sees every now and then.

Luke decided to participate in the Hearing Voices Network with the Voices Vic team at Uniting, where he was able to connect with other voice hearers as well as professionals and carers.

No one at the group judged Luke for his voice hearing experiences, and he was accepted and welcomed into the group’s discussions and reflections.

The opportunity to engage with others in this way was life changing for Luke, and he no longer wanted to spend his days at home by himself.

Luke wanted to give back to the community, so he started volunteering with Uniting’s Hartley’s Café and neighbouring Opportunity Shop.

He has been a familiar and welcomed face at these services and the Hearing Voices Group now for many years, where he feels welcomed, supported and appreciated.

**Julia**

*(Name used with permission)*

As a retired teacher and social worker, Julia knows the importance of having someone to listen during a time of need.

Julia has been a Lifeline volunteer for over 25 years.

“Listening to people is an essential skill to have in this role,” says Julia.

“We’re not there to fix the problem.

“We listen, encourage and drop in the odd suggestion when possible.”

Julia first started volunteering with Lifeline in Melbourne in 1995.

When she moved to Ballarat 3 years later, she joined the local Lifeline team.

Uniting Vic.Tas operates both the Melbourne and Ballarat Lifeline centres.

Julia has also volunteered as a prison chaplain.

“A close family member had mental health challenges, so it’s something that is important to me,” says Julia.

Julia has answered thousands of crisis calls.

But she likes to think of crisis in a different way to many.

“People often view the word “crisis” as a negative,” she explains.

“But I see the word “crisis” as meaning “crossroads,” where you can choose your direction.

“I choose to see crisis as an opportunity to go in a better direction.”

When COVID-19 hit, the 84-year-old was no longer able to attend the Lifeline office.

Instead, she now offers support to fellow volunteers when difficult calls come through.

“I am also available for volunteers to debrief at the end of the session if they need to talk to someone,” says Julia.

“As a Lifeline volunteer, it’s important to talk to others, to look after yourself.”

After all these years volunteering, Julia says she is grateful for the many life lessons she has learned along the way.

“I’m learning all the time from the callers and from fellow volunteers,” she says.

“I have always been the one who gained. I joined because I thought I’d like to help other people, but through the training and from my peers, I’ve learned a lot more about myself.”

**6. Some Additional Background**

**BEYOND BLUE**

* One in seven Australians will experience depression in their lifetime.
* One quarter of Australians will experience an anxiety condition in their lifetime.
* One in 16 Australians is currently experiencing depression.
* One in seven Australians is currently experiencing an anxiety condition.
* One in six Australians is currently experiencing depression or anxiety or both.
* Support-seeking appears to be growing at a rapid rate, with around half of all people with a condition now getting treatment.
* Females are more likely than males to experience depression and anxiety.
* One in 14 females is currently experiencing depression compared with one in 19 men. One in six females is currently experiencing an anxiety condition compared to one in nine men.
* One in eight Australians is currently experiencing high or very high psychological distress.

\* An affective disorder is defined by the ABS as one or more of the following: depressive episode, dysthymia and bipolar affective disorder.

\*\* An anxiety disorder is defined by the ABS as one or more of the following: panic disorder, agoraphobia, social phobia, generalised anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.

(Source <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/media/statistics>)

**MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AUSTRALIA**

* Almost 1 in 2 (45%) of the population aged 16-85 will experience a mental disorder at some time in their life.
* 1 in 5 (20%) of the population had experienced a common mental disorder in the previous 12 months. Of these, *Anxiety disorders* (such as social phobia) were the most prevalent, afflicting 14.4% of the population, followed by *Affective disorders* (such as depression) (6.2%), and *Substance use disorders* (such as alcohol dependence) (5.1%)
* Almost 1 in 7 (13.9%) children and adolescents aged 4–17 years were assessed as experiencing mental health disorders in the previous 12 months. *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (ADHD) was the most common mental disorder (7.4% of all children and adolescents), followed by *Anxiety disorders* (6.9%), major *Depressive disorder* (2.8%) and *Conduct disorder* (2.1%).
* Almost one third (30.0%) of all 4–17 year olds with a disorder experienced 2 or more mental disorders at some time in the previous 12 months.
* Males have a higher prevalence of mental disorders than females (4:3)
* First Nations people are 2.4 times more likely to suffer a mental or substance disorder.

(Source <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/summary-of-mental-health-services-in-australia/prevalence-impact-and-burden>)

**MHSA – PRESCRIPTION DATA**

* **40.7 million** mental health-related medications (subsidised and under co-payment) were dispensed in 2019–20.
* **4.4 million patients (17.2% of the Australian population)** filled a prescription for a mental health-related medication in 2019–20, with an average of 9.2 prescriptions per patient.
* **61.7%** of mental health-related prescriptions filled were subsidised by the PBS/RPBS in 2019–20.
* **82.7%** of mental health-related prescriptions filled were prescribed by GPs; **7.3%** prescribed by psychiatrists; **4.6%** prescribed by non-psychiatrist specialists in 2019–20.
* **72.1%** of mental health-related prescriptions filled were for Antidepressant medications in 2019–20.

(Source <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/mental-health-related-prescriptions>)

**COMMUNITY SUPPORTS**

Lifeline [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au) 13 14 11

Beyond Blue [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) 1300 224636

Kids Helpline [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) 1800 551800

MensLine [www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au) 1300 789978

Open Arms [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au) 1800 011046 (Defence Forces)

Butterfly Foundation [www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au) 1800 334673 (Eating Disorders)

**7. Advocacy**

The mental health system across Australia is fragmented across Federal and state responsibilities. Whilst Victoria has taken the lead in establishing and accepting all the recommendations of the Mental Health Royal Commission, Tasmania is yet to genuinely prioritise and put mental health on the Agenda.  The Federal government is responsible for income support and housing. The failure of the Federal Government to raise the rate of income and social support payment above the poverty line only exacerbates the severity and occurrence of mental health issues across Australia.

**At Uniting we advocate** the Federal, Victorian and Tasmanian governments ‘act on mental health’ through:

* Increased strategic investment on both early intervention and prevention
* Increase social security payment above the poverty line
* Investment in social and affordable housing including increase Commonwealth Rental assistance
* Expand and scale up psychosocial support programs
* Develop a broader integrated mental health system inclusive of Alcohol and other drugs (AOD), housing, financial assistance financial counselling, stable employment.
* Paid peer workforce program
* Deliver initiatives to prevent and address community and institutional stigma towards people living with mental illness
* Mandate consumer and carer inclusive practices.

**8. Acknowledgement**

These resources have been created and compiled by Uniting for use in congregational worship and may be modified and used according to local custom with acknowledgment.