

# **The Mental Health of Australians 2**

**Report on the 2007 National Survey  
of Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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## FOREWORD

The *Mental Health of Australians 2* provides a comprehensive summary of the results of the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Despite the very different context from 1997, when the first national survey was conducted, the results are remarkably similar.

One in five Australians continued to experience mental illness. Just over one third had received services for their mental health problems and the majority of those that didn't use services reported that they didn't need them. Not enough people accessed mental health services – services that can and should be helping with their mental health problems. Mental illness also continued to place a large burden upon the community, especially those who care for others experiencing mental health problems. In short, these results do not provide the evidence of improvements in access to mental health services and the mental health of Australians that were anticipated given the increasing investment in mental health services and targeted initiatives over the previous decade.

The survey provides a wealth of information on mental disorders, their severity, associated suicidality, and comorbidity with other mental disorders and physical conditions, as well as information on the health services people use for mental health problems and their connections with family and friends. Understanding the complex interplay between these factors is essential in determining the extent to which the apparent lack of progress in the treatment of mental disorders is due to problems with access to services and whether other factors are preventing people seeking mental health care. This information is a key component of the evidence base that will guide our work in mental health more generally over the coming years.

Special thanks must be given to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' staff and experts who assisted in the development and analysis of the survey and, most importantly, to each of the respondents, whose generosity in answering such a long, complex and often intensely personal survey has allowed this important new evidence to be gathered.

The Government has committed through the revised *National Mental Health Policy 2008* and work on a new, fourth national mental health plan, to work with states and territories on mental health reforms. It continues its significant investment in improving the access of Australians to mental health services by funding an expanded range of services by general practitioners and allied health professionals through Medicare and by better utilising telephone and web-based services. The Government also remains committed to working to improve the evidence on which all good policy and service reforms should be based. The aim is to ensure that future mental health initiatives promote better and more timely access to mental health services targeted to people's needs.



Nicola Roxon  
Minister for Health  
May 2009

