

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Mental health and wellbeing in Hobsons Bay



Our health is determined by much more than genes and lifestyle decisions. It is determined by the circumstances in which we are born, grow, live, work and age.

Through its various functions, local governments play a major role in protecting, improving and promoting the health of its residents. As the closest level of government to the community, local governments work to understand the populations they serve and ensure all residents are provided with an environment which allows everyone to equally achieve the best personal health and wellbeing possible.

This research summary is aimed at providing information about the social and environmental conditions that affect the health and wellbeing of Hobsons Bay residents.

What is mental health and wellbeing?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is defined as:

'a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community' (WHO, 2004).

What factors influence mental health and wellbeing?

The circumstances and environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with others are powerful influences on our mental wellbeing (VicHealth, 2015).

Within this, it is understood that the key underlying **social determinants of mental health** include:

- social inclusion and connectedness
- freedom from violence and discrimination
- access to economic resources such as housing, income, education and employment
- urban design elements within the built and natural environment such as natural light and green spaces

Some population groups are more vulnerable to the factors which influence mental wellbeing. When working to address these factors, some people will require a more targeted response and or additional support. This includes groups such as children, young people, women, people from culturally and linguistically

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diverse (CALD) and refugee backgrounds, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, people on low incomes, older people, people with a disability, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer (LGBTIQ+).

While someone's mental health and wellbeing can be influenced by their circumstances and environments at any stage of life, research shows that intervening during the early years (WHO, 2012) and adolescence has the most potential to positively influence lifelong mental wellbeing (VicHealth, 2015).

The global incidence of mental illness¹ is growing. It has been estimated that by 2030, depression will be one of the world's leading causes of disease (VicHealth, 2007). The most prevalent mental disorders in Australia are anxiety disorders (e.g. social phobia), affective or mood disorders (e.g. depression), and substance use disorders (e.g. alcohol dependence).

One in three Australians will experience a mental illness during their lives (Commonwealth Government, 2012) and it is estimated that one in five have experienced a common mental disorder in the previous 12 months (AIHW, 2018).

What do we know about mental health in Hobsons Bay?

Latest figures from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2014 show that approximately nine per cent of the

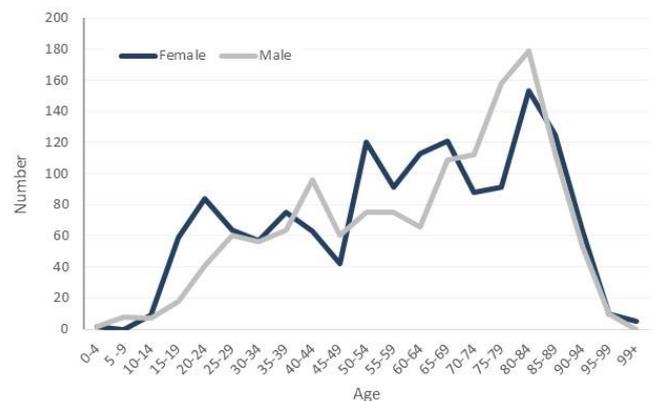
¹ The Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria) defines mental illness as a health condition that changes a person's thinking, feelings or behaviours (or all three), which causes the person distress and difficulty in functioning. Examples are Depression, Anxiety,

Hobsons Bay population suffers from high to very high levels of psychological distress. This is lower than the rates for the North Western Metropolitan region (13.2 per cent) and Victoria (12.6 per cent). This is also lower than national estimates of 11.7 per cent.

Hospital Admissions

In 2017-18, there were a total of 2,793 mental health inpatient admissions² (1,433 females and 1,360 males) for Hobsons Bay residents (DHHS, 2018). Ageing plays an important role, with 25 per cent of hospitalisations experienced by people aged 80 years and over. Mental health conditions in older persons may also be attributed to organic causes.

Figure 1: Mental health inpatient admissions, Hobsons Bay residents – 2017-18 (Source: DHHS, 2018)



However, there are also notable differences by gender in the younger age groups. For instance, there are more mental health inpatient admissions for young women, including the 15-19 age group (59 females compared to 18 males) and the 20 to 24 age group (84 vs 41).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and Schizophrenia

² Mental health inpatient admissions include a range of mental health conditions and behavioural disorders.

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Women in the 50 to 54 age group are also over represented (120 vs 75). On the other hand, males aged 40 to 44 have a higher rate of mental health inpatient admissions (96 vs 63).

Psychological Disability³

Estimates for psychological disabilities show that 1,900 people in Hobsons Bay experienced psychosocial disability due to mental illness in 2015, which is 44 per cent of all psychosocial disability. Others include nervous conditions and social or behavioural difficulties (ABS, 2015).

Young People

Evidence shows that many mental disorders first arise during childhood or adolescence. For example, half of all people with mental illness will have had their first symptoms by the age of 14, and three quarters by their mid-twenties (Department of Health, 2011).

Mental health is a particular concern for young people in Hobsons Bay (see Table 1). In 2015-16, the rate of mental health inpatient admissions for 10 to 17 year olds (9.06 per 1,000 people) was higher than the rate for the Western Metropolitan Region (6.46 per 1,000 people) and Victoria (7.85 per 1,000 people). The rates for all three jurisdictions has increased since 2010-11 (DHHS, 2018).

Mental health inpatient admissions occur at a higher rate in the 18 to 24 year old age range. In 2015-16, the rate in Hobsons Bay (17.48 per 1,000 people) was similar to that for the Western Metropolitan Region (17.23 per 1,000 people) but below the rate for Victoria (21.80 per 1,000 people). However the

data also shows that the rate for this age group in Hobsons Bay decreased from 18.17 per 1,000 in 2010-11, despite an increase in the rates for the WMR and Victoria over the same period.

Table 1: Mental health inpatient admissions for young people in 2010-11 and 2015-16 (Source: DHHS, 2018)

Age	Area	2010-11	2015-16
		Rate per 1,000 population	
10-17 years	Hobsons Bay	7.87	9.06
	Western Metro Region	5.92	6.46
	Victoria	6.82	7.85
18-24 years	Hobsons Bay	18.17	17.48
	Western Metro Region	16.34	17.23
	Victoria	18.17	21.80

In 2017-18, clients accessing the Hobsons Bay Youth Counselling Service were (on average) 15 years of age. This is slightly younger than previous years when the average age was 16. Over the last three years the waiting list for this service has grown from three weeks in 2015-16 to up to 10 weeks in July 2018. This clearly demonstrates the need for more youth mental health services in Hobsons Bay.

The most common counselling theme was mental health (depression, anxiety, eating disorders, psychosis or substance abuse), followed by family issues and anger management. These figures are likely to be an underestimate as only one in four young people with mental health problems

³ Psychological disability is a term used to describe the impact of a diagnosed mental illness. A person with a severe mental illness will experience limitations to their

levels of functioning (e.g. learning, working and social participation) and may require supports.

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seek professional help (Sawyer et al, 2000).

What government policies relate to improving mental health and wellbeing?

The **World Health Organisation** is the leading global voice for mental health, promoting a holistic approach to improving mental wellbeing. The **Melbourne Charter 2008**, developed through the Global Consortium for the Advancement of Promotion and Prevention in Mental Health (GCAPP) conference, provides an additional framework recognising the influence of social and environmental determinants of mental wellbeing.

Commonwealth

In 2015, the Australian Government released reforms in response to '**Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities**', a review of mental health programs and services undertaken by the National Mental Health Commission.

The review lists the following interconnected areas which are being implemented until 2019:

- Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to receive federal funding to commission local services based on need
- a digital mental health gateway will be established to provide phone (single telephone hotline) and online access as a first line of support
- primary mental health care programs and services will be re-focused to support a 'stepped care' model designed to match individual needs
- joined-up support will be provided for child mental health, along with an integrated and equitable approach to youth mental health

- mental health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities will be enhanced, a renewed approach will be taken in relation to suicide prevention, and people with severe and complex mental illness will be offered coordinated care packages

These reforms follow the government's commitment towards mental health reform shown by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in the **Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-22**.

The reforms also prompted a renewed approach to suicide prevention, outlined in the **National Suicide Prevention Strategy** which provides an emphasis on promotion, prevention and early intervention. From 2016, Primary Health Networks have been tasked with commissioning regionally appropriate activities and services, and working with local organisations to better target people at risk of suicide.

The **Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan**, released in 2017, seeks to establish a national approach across eight target areas including reducing stigma and discrimination, improving the physical health of people with a mental illness and achieving integrated regional planning and service delivery. An implementation plan, performance framework and national indicators have also been developed and a report card will measure progress each year.

State

Victoria's 10 Year Mental Health Plan was released in 2015, and builds on the previous government's long-term mental

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health strategy, *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-19*. This plan delivers a long term vision to improve mental health services and the wellbeing of Victorians with a mental illness.

The plan's goal is that all Victorians experience their best possible health, including mental health, with the Victorian Government committed to creating a healthier, fairer and more inclusive society. The plan aims to achieve 15 outcomes within the following four focus areas:

1. Victorians have good mental health and wellbeing
2. Victorians promote mental health for all ages and stages of life
3. Victorians with mental illness live fulfilling lives of their choosing, with or without symptoms of mental illness
4. the service system is accessible, flexible and responsive to people of all ages, their families and carers and the workforce is supported to deliver this

The **Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework 2016-25** is a whole of government commitment to reducing suicide and suicidal behaviour, and delivers investment towards the goals of Victoria's 10 Year Mental Health Plan. The target embedded within the framework is to save one life every day.

Improving mental health is also one of six priority areas in the **Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015-19**, with one of the key strategic directions being to enhance and develop strategies to promote mental health and wellbeing.

The **VicHealth Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2015-19** provides a focus on wellbeing, in particular, building resilience

and social connection for young people through working in the following settings: workplaces, digital and online environments, sports and physical activities, schools, and the arts. The aim is that by 2023 there will be one million more Victorians with better mental health and wellbeing.

Regional

Mental health is one of three focus areas within the **Better Health Plan for the West (BHPW)**. The BHPW brings together over 20 agencies across primary care, acute health, government, social support and other sectors in partnership to create healthy and engaged communities in the West.

What is Council's role in relation to mental health and wellbeing?

Under section 24 of Victoria's *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*, local government has a legislated role to 'seek to protect, improve and promote public health and wellbeing within the municipal district'.

Data indicates that mental health is an issue within Hobsons Bay across all age groups, particularly for younger people.

Local government services, functions and programs can influence many of the determinants of mental wellbeing, such as:

Social inclusion and connectedness

- provide community spaces such as libraries, community centres, recreational and open spaces, and implement community development initiatives which connect the community
- recognise and celebrate diversity and culture, especially reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

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- encourage participation for all in arts, cultural and sporting activities
- provide access to culturally appropriate information, services and activities
- encourage and coordinate civic participation such as volunteering and membership on Council committees
- work to maintain a strong sense of community
- provide opportunities for the community to take action on issues of importance to them

Gender equity and freedom from violence and discrimination

- support the prevention of men's violence against women and promote respectful relationships
- lead by example by providing a fair and flexible workplace that is free from violence and discrimination and actively promotes gender equity
- understand potential gender barriers when delivering services and programs
- understand different types of stigma faced by someone with a mental illness and demonstrate leadership in tolerance and understanding
- raise awareness of mental health and the impacts of mental illness in the community to reduce discrimination

Access to economic resources including income, employment, education and housing

- understand community needs, establish an evidence base and advocate to state and federal government on issues such as the importance of affordable housing and access to education and training

- continue to promote the mental health of Council employees through the delivery of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and relevant Organisation Development policies and Enterprise Agreements
- continue to provide support for people on low incomes
- provide educational programs for young people which increase resilience and promote protective factors for mental health
- provide learning opportunities through libraries and community centres

Built and natural environment

- ensure new developments support mental health through appropriate design including urban design, size of dwellings, access to open space, natural light and ventilation
- ensure public infrastructure encourages walkability and active transport for all ages and abilities
- provide accessible sport and recreational facilities, playgrounds, libraries and community centres
- support community safety through utilising Safer by Design Guidelines, improving natural public surveillance, sightlines, connections, lighting, and encouraging community activity
- increase access to natural green spaces such as open space, parks, gardens and the foreshore, providing opportunities to engage with nature

Access to health services

- continue to provide a youth counselling service and other services such as maternal and child health
- advocate for more GPs, allied health and mental health services to be located within Hobsons Bay

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- ensure Council's services understand and respond to community needs

Food security

- build community capacity to access healthy food through gardening and healthy eating workshops
- continue to support best practice land use planning by making communities more walkable and increasing fresh fruit and vegetable stores
- advocate to state government to decrease access to fast food outlets, especially those located in low socioeconomic areas

Climate change

- maintain Council's leadership role in climate change mitigation and adaptation
- continue to educate the community about sustainability and adapting to climate change
- provide community support during the response to local emergencies

Updated 2018

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Every care has been taken to ensure the information in this document is correct. However Hobsons Bay City Council does not accept any liability to any person or organisation for the information (or the use of the information) in this document. Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report. Please check the online version at <www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au> for any amendments.

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