



**The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**  
Minister for Health

**MEDIA RELEASE**

5 September 2018

**New appointments to drive better mental health support**

The National Mental Health Commission advisory board will be strengthened with the appointment of four new members who will continue to drive better support for the four million Australians who experience some form of chronic or episodic mental health condition each year

I am pleased to announce that Ms Kerry Hawkins, Professor Maree Teesson AC, Ms Christina McGuffie and Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM have agreed to serve on the Commission's board.

Professor Ngiare Brown, a senior medical practitioner and researcher, has also been reappointed to the Commission for a new term.

Lucy Brogden will continue to lead the advisory board in her role as Chair, with the new members boosting the female representation to more than three quarters of the board.

The new appointees bring expertise and stakeholder perspectives across a broad field of issues, including suicide prevention, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health, lived experience as carers and consumers, research, youth mental health and social services.

I extend my deep thanks to the outgoing board members for their insights and passion for their work.

Professor Ian Hickie AM, Mr Samuel Hockey Dr Peggy Brown AO and the late Jackie Crow each helped to elevate the importance of mental health and suicide prevention and supported the Government's mental health reform agenda.

Today I have also pledged the Federal Government's support for the *National Communications Charter* — a unified approach to mental health and suicide prevention.

The Charter will help guide people working in the sector to tackle mental illness and prevent suicide in our community by reinforcing the importance of providing clear, consistent and evidence-based information.

I signed the Charter alongside key mental health stakeholders, including National Mental Health Commissioner Professor Wendy Cross, Everymind Director Jaelea Skehan, beyondblue CEO Georgie Harman, headspace CEO Jason Trethowan, Suicide Prevention Australia CEO Nieves Murray and CEO of Mental Health Australia Frank Quinlan.

Authorised by Greg Hunt MP, Liberal Party of Australia, Somerville, Victoria.

This charter will guide organisations, individuals and groups in Australia's mental health and suicide prevention sector on ways to promote awareness of mental health and suicide prevention and how to encourage people to seek help in a clear and consistent way.

I am absolutely committed to providing more support the four million Australians that experience some form of chronic or episodic mental health condition each year.

We recently boosted our support by an extra \$338 million of mental health funding, with a focus on greater suicide prevention services, more support for older Australians and advancing the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

(ENDS)

### **National Mental Health Commission Advisory Board**

- Lucy Brogden (chair)
- Prof. Wendy Cross
- Prof. Helen Milroy
- Prof. Harvey Whiteford
- Kerry Hawkins (Carer Representative)
- Christina McGuffie (Consumer Representative)
- Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM
- Prof Maree Teeson
- Prof. Ngiare Brown

### **Biographies of incoming National Mental Health Commission Advisory Board members:**

#### **Kerry Hawkins**

Ms Kerry Hawkins is the current president of the Western Australian Association for Mental Health. She has previously worked as a senior program manager for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the Mental Health Commission, and as a Carer Consultant for North Metro Adult Health Service. She is also vice president of Helping Minds and WA director for Emerging Minds.

#### **Rabbi Mendel Kastel OAM**

Rabbi Mendel Kastel, CEO of the Jewish House, Sydney, has extensive experience in community welfare work and is highly respected for his achievements in dealing with problems amongst Sydney's youth. His skill, knowledge and interest spans across the broad spectrum of mental health including trauma, homelessness, youth, suicide prevention, economics, social investment and innovation. Rabbi Kastel has experienced first-hand the problems of dealing with entire communities, understanding the importance of establishing and making available life-changing programs for those living in the community.

#### **Christina McGuffie**

Ms Christina McGuffie has lived experience as both a mental health consumer and carer. She also has 28 years' experience in journalism and government advisory work. She has demonstrated strong communication and stakeholder engagement skills and her experience in communications, media and mental health advice to government is of particular value to the advisory board.

**Professor Maree Teesson AC**

Professor Teesson is currently a Director at the National Health and Medical Research (NHMRC) Council Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use and NHMRC Principal Research Fellow at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. She is Professorial Fellow at the Black Dog Institute, University of New South Wales and a Fellow at the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences and Fellow at the Australian Academy of Social Sciences.