National Mental Health Commission holds third meeting of Advisory Council

Communiqué

The National Mental Health Commission's (the Commission) Advisory Council held its third meeting on 11 November 2026. The meeting was chaired by the Commission's CEO, David McGrath.

The Council was established to give strategic advice and expert insight to the Commission to support its work to help to improve Australia's mental health system. The Council brings together national leaders and subject matter experts, including those with lived experience.

At the meeting, the following issues were discussed:

Emerging pressures and priorities

- Members shared their insights about emerging pressures on mental health and wellbeing in Australia, including cost-of-living pressures, housing insecurity and preparedness for extreme weather.
- Members discussed barriers to accessing affordable mental health services and psychosocial supports, alongside increasing demand, workforce pressures and rising costs affecting provider sustainability.
- Members discussed national planning, funding certainty and psychology training pathways.
- Concerns were raised about stigma and discrimination in recent media reporting and public discourse, as well as within some healthcare settings.
- Members noted promising service access and commissioning initiatives, and the importance of ensuring the Commission's work is informed by robust and comprehensive evidence.

Digital experiences of children and young people

- Members were briefed on the 'Digital Experiences of Children and Young People' research project and findings.
- Members discussed the complexity of the evidence on digital experiences, recognising potential benefits and risks, and the need for balance.
- They highlighted digital duty of care, safety by design and platform accountability, and the need to include young people and families in developing safer digital environments.
- Further research opportunities were identified, including to better understand the role of parents and families, cultural considerations and the digital experiences of adults.

System Mapping Project

- NOUS Group presented the Mental Health System Mapping Project and sought members' feedback on draft conceptual maps intended to build a shared understanding of the mental health system.

- Members welcomed the broader view of the mental health system, encompassing promotion and prevention alongside treatment, support and recovery.
- Members highlighted the importance of refining the maps to reflect structural forces, wider determinants and the relationships, families and communities that shape people's experiences, including those of people seeking support who are unable to access care
- Members encouraged further exploration of service pathways, unmet need and how people move through the system to inform funding and service design.

National Report Card

- Members discussed refinements to the National Report Card, noting the Commission's objective to ensure its information is relevant, accessible and able to inform policy and program decisions.
- Members shared insights and experience to support ongoing improvement of the Commission's monitoring and reporting function.
- The importance of explaining trends over time and the structural drivers behind changes in mental health and wellbeing was noted.
- Members encouraged reporting that reflects different communities and experiences, and discussed strengthening data consistency, incorporating lived experience insights and providing targeted reporting on key issues.
- Members discussed how reporting can support government accountability, while recognising data limitations and the need for meaningful comparisons.
- Members highlighted the importance of reporting on the needs and experiences of children, young people and families.

As 2026 draws to a close, the Commission thanks Council members for their valuable contributions, insights and experience. The Advisory Council will next meet in March 2027.