Media release - Mind Australia

29 October 2026

Lived Experience: The vital voice missing from the media's mental health debate

Mind Australia is deeply disappointed by the direction of public debate about mental health and the way people experiencing mental health challenges are being portrayed in our national media. We stand alongside people with lived and living experience and are concerned that public commentary risks reinforcing stigma, fear and frustration by associating mental health challenges with violence.

While recent media coverage raises important questions about the gaps in mental health care, we're concerned that the debate is once again dominated by calls for more of the same approaches that have failed people in the past, including a renewed focus on institutional care.

"The vital voices missing from this debate are those of people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges, their families, supporters, carers, and kin and the community-managed mental health sector. This expertise, particularly from service users, is essential to understanding what is failing and what needs to change," stated Ellie Hodges, Mind Australia's interim Executive Director, Lived Experience.

The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System set out a vision for a transformed mental health system in 2021 containing 74 recommendations, with lived experience leadership at its heart and a greater focus on dignity, choice and community-based support. This vision has relevance well beyond Victoria. Yet its promise remains unrealised, and people across Australia continue to face barriers to accessing timely, individualised and ongoing mental health support.

Mind's Chief Executive Officer, Denise Cumming added, "We cannot afford to lose sight of this ambition. Reverting to institution-focused solutions is not only harmful to public perceptions of people experiencing mental health challenges, it will not address the systemic failures that have left people without the support they need."

"Clinical mental health services are not the sole solution either. People need early intervention, psychosocial support, safe housing and sustained care that enables recovery and connection to community. Community-managed mental health services are central to this response and must be properly recognised and resourced," Ms Cumming said.

Mind Australia calls on politicians, clinicians and the media to broaden this conversation. We must listen to people with lived experience, their families, carers, supporters and kin, recognise the expertise of community mental health services and invest in a connected mental health system that supports people before, during and after a crisis.

Australia needs a transformed mental health system, not a return to the thinking of the past. Lived experience, recovery and community support that supports people where they are in the ways they want must be at its core.

About Mind Australia

Mind Australia is one of the nation's leading specialist community mental health providers, offering residential, mobile outreach, centre-based and online support for people experiencing mental health challenges.

Alongside One Door Mental Health and The Haven Foundation, we provide individualised, evidence-based and recovery-focused support to more than 25,000 people each year.

Visit our website to find out more – www.mindaustralia.org.au

Media contact: Acting Mind Australia Communications Manager Keagan Ryan on 0474 000 433 or Keagan.ryan@mindaustralia.org.au