



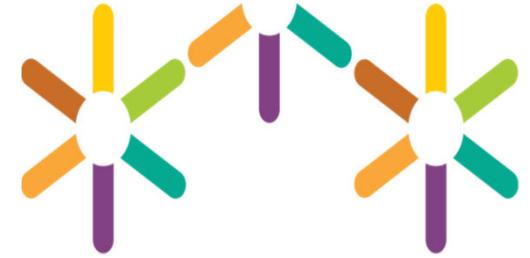
Government of Western Australia
Mental Health Commission

Dr Sophie Davison
Chief Medical Officer Mental Health

Preparing for and responding to the mental health impacts of COVID 19

*We're working for
Western Australia.*





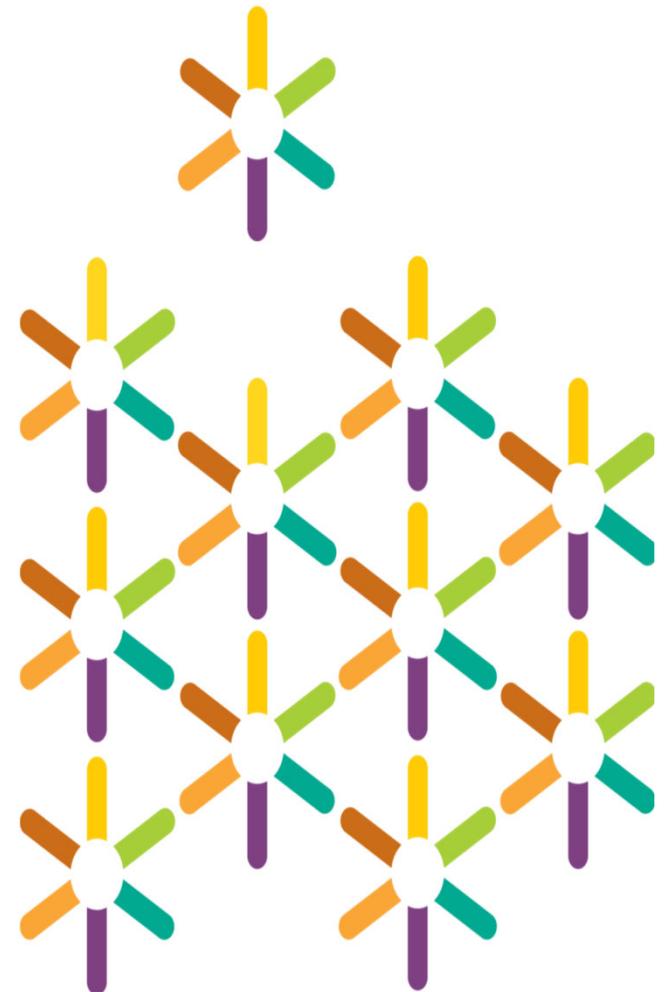
Acknowledgement of country

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Wadjuk people of the Noongar Nation and pay my respect to their Elders past and present and emerging.

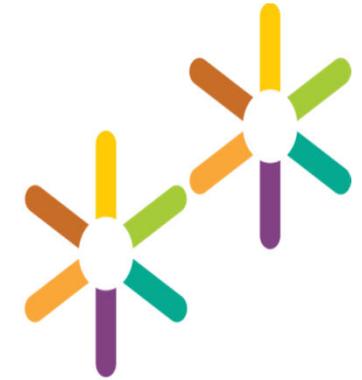


Acknowledgment of lived experience

I would like to acknowledge all people of lived experience of mental health issues and those living with alcohol and other drug use issues, their families, carers and loved ones. I recognise their vital contribution at all levels and value the courage of those who share this perspective for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all.



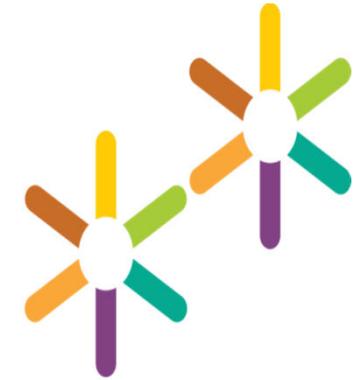
Preparing for and responding to mental health impacts of COVID19



- Themes of senate:
 - Vulnerable populations
 - New presentations of psychological distress related to COVID
 - Things we started and stopped
 - Vaccination
- I will touch on all these
- With particular emphasis on the impact of COVID 19 on people with pre-existing mental illness and their families and carers



Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health

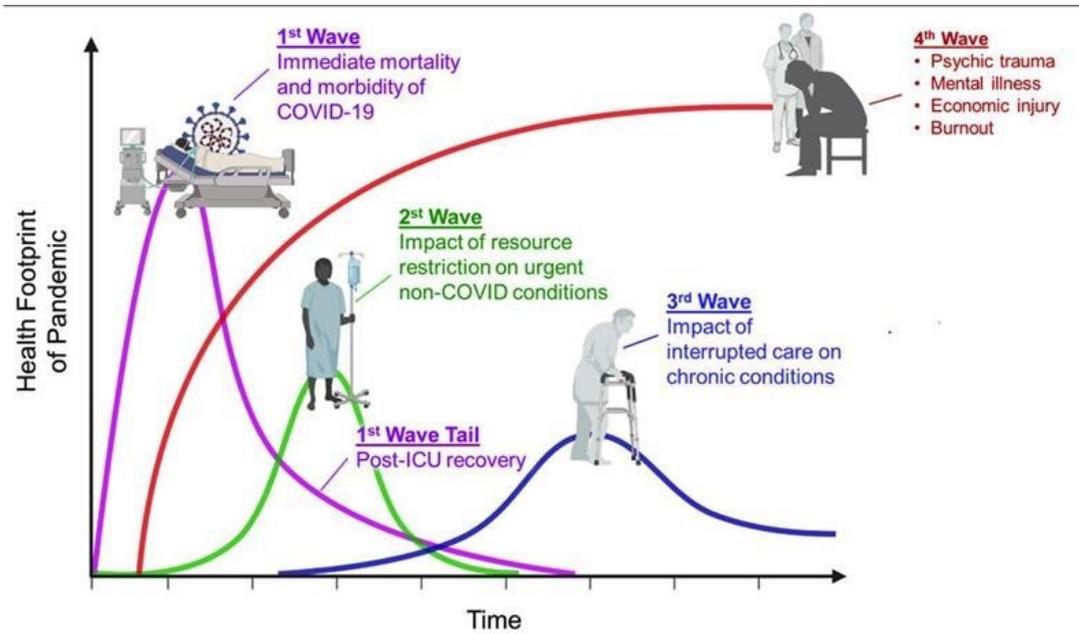
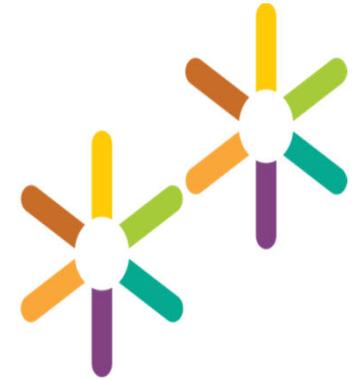


- Loneliness and isolation
- Loss/grief
- Fear and uncertainty
- Economic losses
- Trauma
- People already struggling with their mental health particularly vulnerable
- Additional factors
 - Removal of usual supports
 - Staying away from services

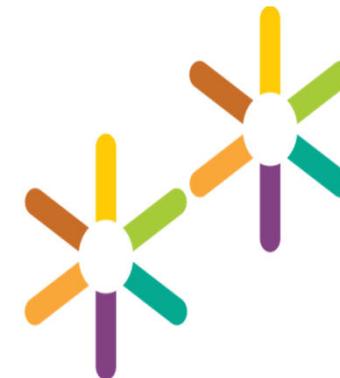


Pandemic waves

(picture courtesy of Richard Gillett DOH)



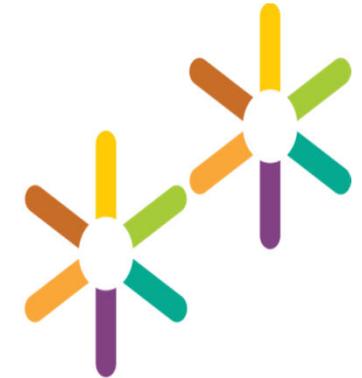
Mental Health Issues when responding to the impacts of COVID 19



- Keeping people well and preventing deterioration
- Mental health and wellbeing of those who care for people with mental illness
 - Informal carers and family
 - Health care workers
 - Community support workers
- Managing the vulnerability of people with severe mental illness to COVID19 illness



Keeping people with pre-existing mental illness well

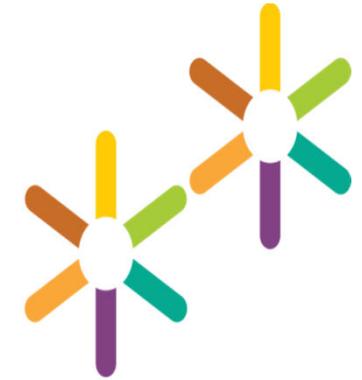


- Loneliness and isolation
 - Facilitating contact with family, carers and other supports by AV
- Preventing delays or interruption in treatment
 - Supporting community mental health teams to actively maintain engagement with people
- Supporting community accommodation providers and other community supports to maintain continuity of support
- Supporting people with mental illness in complying with public health directions



Effect of pandemic on carers

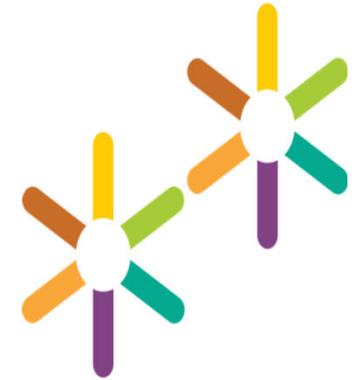
Mind Australia COVID 19 Carer Survey May 2020



Informal mental health carers provide 14 billion dollars of support in Australia



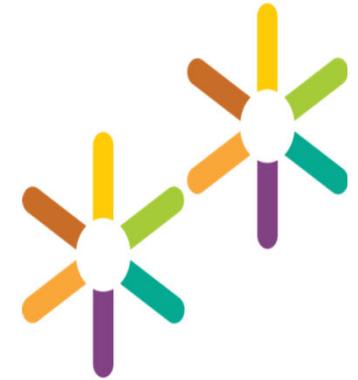
Healthcare staff



- Internationally COVID 19 pandemic has caused high levels of
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Post traumatic stress disorder
 - Burn out
- Related to:
 - Exhaustion
 - Heightened fear of infection of self and loved ones
 - Trauma of working with dying patients and making difficult rationing decisions
 - Isolation from loved ones



Keeping the workforce well

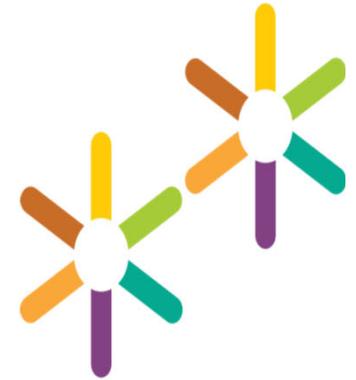


- Staff wellbeing framework
- Staff wellbeing helpline and assistance for those in distress

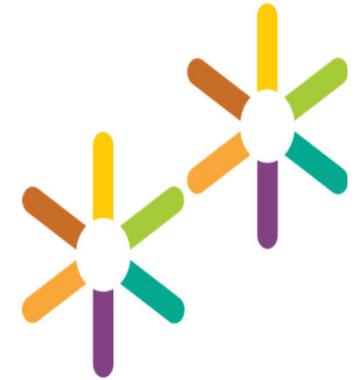


Supporting community service providers

- Outbreak planning
- PPE
- Infection control
- Continuity of support from community mental health services and other support providers
- Managing disturbed behaviour



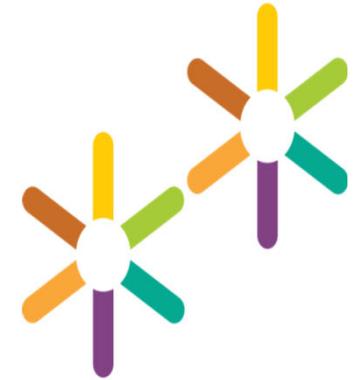
Managing the vulnerability of people with severe mental health problems to COVID-19



- Before COVID people with severe mental illness 2-3 mortality than those without
- High rates of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and smoking ie risk factors for severe COVID 19 infection.
- Many may have difficulty understanding and complying with infection control measures
- Living in overcrowded congregate living situations- risks similar to aged care and disability congregate living
- Support staff not clinically trained.



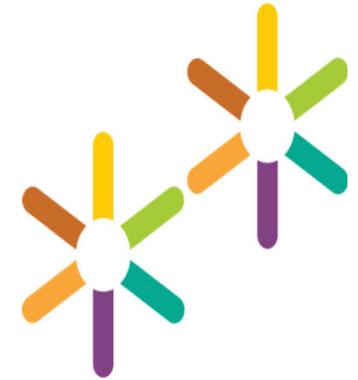
How to ensure uptake of vaccinations?



- Australia along with UK, Germany and Denmark have identified people with severe mental illness as priority populations for vaccination.
- Many may be prioritised by virtue of their co-occurring medical problems
- Need to specifically encourage uptake of vaccines by people with severe mental illness
- Generally a low uptake of preventive health programmes
- Issues around capacity and consent



Conclusion



- We need to prepare for the wave of new presentations with psychological distress and worsening of pre-existing mental illness.
- But also make sure we provide support for:
 - Informal carers
 - Healthcare and community support workers
- Continue to keep people in the community well
- Ensure people with severe mental illness have access to and good uptake of vaccination

