



**The Hon. Greg Hunt MP**  
Minister for Health and Aged Care

**MEDIA RELEASE**

26 August 2021

**Balancing physical and mental health - all a part of Being Equally Well**

The Morrison Government has welcomed the release of the National Policy Roadmap to Being Equally Well, which aims to improve the physical health care provided to Australians living with serious mental illness.

The Being Equally Well Roadmap is aimed at reducing the life expectancy gap for people living with a mental illness, and shows that physical health and wellbeing must be a priority for health care providers when working with a person living with a mental illness.

People with a serious mental illness are more likely to die between 14–23 years earlier than the average and their deaths make up around one third of all avoidable deaths in Australia.

They are six times more likely to die of cardiovascular disease and four times more likely to die of respiratory disease. We need to ensure that these rates are turned around.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt, said the current COVID-19 pandemic was taking a toll on the mental health and wellbeing of Australians, especially those living with a mental illness.

“Our Government is committed to addressing the critical issue of mental health and suicide prevention, and in 2021–22 an estimated \$6.5 billion will be spent on mental health in Australia, including Medicare rebates for mental health care,” Minister Hunt said.

“Through our historic \$2.3 billion *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan* we have also committed to providing additional funding for the Equally Well Program to support improvements to the physical health of those living with a mental illness.

The Being Equally Well Roadmap is the work of the Australian Health Policy Collaboration (AHPC), Equally Well Australia, health professionals and multi-disciplinary academic experts.

Professor of Health Policy and Director of the Australian Health Policy Collaboration, Professor Rosemary Calder AM, said better physical health and longer lives for people living with mental illness needs the combined skills and expertise of both mental health and primary health services.

“Both mental and physical health care need to be connected and to have capacity to support the complex needs of individuals over their lifetimes. Primary health care is central to better physical health care and this report shows how the role of primary care can be strengthened and supported,” Professor Calder said.

“This report is the result of the collaboration of chronic disease and population health practitioners, mental health practitioners and consumers and carers who have worked together to identify how best to do so.”

The AHPC is led by the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University, linking leading health organisations and chronic disease experts to inform better policy through the findings of rigorous health research.

Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University, Adam Shoemaker, said equity of access to opportunity lies at the heart of what drives Victoria University and it was that commitment which led to the establishment of the Mitchell Institute.

“This project represents those deep aspirations. We are confident that it will assist with providing greater access towards equity of health and health outcomes for people living with mental illness. For that reason we are particularly grateful for the support of the Department of Health,” Mr Shoemaker said.

The Morrison Government has provided \$600,000 over three years to the AHPC, and from 2021–22 will contribute a further \$600,000 over the coming three years to 2023–24.

The Being Equally Well Roadmap will encourage clinicians and policy-makers to give a greater focus to physical health in the treatment of mental ill health, and help to close the life expectancy gap for people with mental illness.

**-END-**