



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

**The Hon. David Coleman MP**  
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

**Christine Morgan**  
National Mental Health Commission CEO

## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

12 October 2021

### **Australia launches world's first children's mental health and wellbeing strategy**

The Morrison Government is today launching the world's first National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Strategy provides a framework to guide the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of services to maintain and support the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 0-12 and their families.

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt, said the Strategy was part of the Morrison Government's long-term national health plan.

"Caring for the mental health and wellbeing of our younger children, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is critical. We know that proper support can improve long-term outcomes and can help children achieve their full potential in life," Minister Hunt said.

"To ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow up in a healthy and supportive environment that helps them, and their families and communities, to thrive, we need a mental health and wellbeing system that is well-designed, comprehensive, and nationally consistent."

"This strategy shows us how, and will be crucial to our current ongoing reform of the mental health and suicide prevention system. It is about ensuring the best for our children at each and every step and I'm honoured to launch it today."

The Strategy provides a roadmap through coordinated investment and program development to ensure that children aged 0-12 can have all the opportunities for growth and development possible.

Through four focus areas, the Strategy outlines the requirements for an effective system of care for children:

1. Family and Community
2. Service System
3. Education Settings
4. Evidence and Evaluation

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, David Coleman, MP said the aim of this universal approach will bring lasting benefits for Australia and for generations to come.

“Half of all adult mental health challenges emerge before the age of 14, yet few children below the age of 12 receive professional support. As a nation, we need to acknowledge this and do everything we can to change it. Our Government is committed to the task,” Assistant Minister Coleman said.

“This is the first time a national government has developed a strategy that considers mental health and wellbeing of our children, as well as their families and communities who nurture them.”

Importantly, several key priorities identified in the strategy received funding in the 2021-22 Budget, which provided a record \$2.3 billion for the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan aimed at transforming Australia’s mental health system. Specific initiatives dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and their parents and carers included:

- \$54.2 million to create new Head to Health Kids mental health and wellbeing centres for children up to 12 years, in partnership with the state and territory governments;
- \$42.3 million to support access to parenting education and support, to build parenting strategies and help parents to identify problem behaviours early;
- \$26.8 million to support Kids Helpline and meet the increased demand for services;
- \$47.4 million for perinatal mental health initiatives; and
- \$111.4 million to allow family members and/or carers to access up to two of a patient's available Medicare-subsidised psychological therapy sessions, and to expand access to group sessions where appropriate.

The development of the Strategy was undertaken by the National Mental Health Commission, supported by an expert advisory group.

National Mental Health Commission Chair, Mrs Lucy Brogden AM and CEO, Ms Christine Morgan thanked the many people who helped make the strategy a reality.

“This is one of the most important and meaningful and significant pieces of work we have done at the Commission,” Ms Morgan said.

“This Strategy proposes a fundamental, cultural shift in the way we think about the mental health and wellbeing of our children, including a change in language and the adoption of a continuum-based model of mental health and wellbeing.”

“We could not have done it without our advisory group led by our co-chairs, Professors Frank Oberklaid and Christel Middledorp, and I would like to thank them for their incredible work. Through them and others, we have engaged with hundreds of people who care deeply about the mental health and wellbeing of our children and understand the immense benefits that flow from protecting and nurturing it.”

The Strategy is available on the Commission’s website [www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au)

Australians looking for support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic can access the Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service anytime via telephone at 1800 512 348 or online at [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](http://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au).

Anyone experiencing distress can seek immediate advice and support through Lifeline (13 11 14), Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800), or the Government's digital mental health gateway, Head to Health ([www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)).

**-END-**