

Not enough Mental Health Care Workers for our future - Lived Experience Australia 11 Oct 2022 12:53 PM

National mental health advocacy organisation, Lived Experience Australia (LEA), is extremely concerned by figures released in the [National Care Workforce Labour Study](#). The report, published by the National Skills Commission, shows that there is already a gap in care services (including mental health) against demand, and that this is likely to reach almost 100,000 workers in less than 5 years' time.

LEA has undertaken research with people with lived experience of mental ill-health, along with their families and carers, who expressed many concerns about the pressures on GPs, the workforce skills gaps, and access problems. In the [Missing Middle](#) research one carer stated: *"Public [mental health] services were essentially non-existent, as result of wait times which were estimated to be between 8-12 months."* Similarly, from our Report into [Consumer and Carer Experiences of Psychology Services](#), both consumers and carers identified the top three barriers to accessing a psychologist were wait times, availability, and cost.

Findings from the [2020 Australian Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health](#) indicate up to 40% of Australians are either experiencing mild to severe mental illness (17%) or are at risk of developing mental ill health (23%).

"With mental health concerns on the increase, the gaps indicated in the Care Workforce report are quite alarming," stated Chair and Executive Director of LEA, Professor Sharon Lawn. "From our Missing Middle research, the importance of GPs was evident, given their key role in providing primary mental healthcare – yet they – along with Psychologists and Psychiatrists are identified as already being in short supply in this report."

The report also indicated that emerging mental health occupations and those providing early intervention, prevention, and mental health care and support (such as peer workers and community mental health services) may be where the largest workforce gap may emerge, given that services across aged, disability, veteran and mental health care and support are often competing for the same pool of skilled workers.

Investment is needed to attract, train, and retain more skilled workers into Australia's mental health support system, including psychologists, psychiatrists, GPs, and lived experience/peer workers. We also need to listen to people who are coming through the education system to understand what they say would attract them to mental health work, then act on what they say.

Key Facts:

National Skills Commission report states gap in care services (including mental health) could be as high as 100,000 in the next 5 years

Up to 40% of Australians are either experiencing mental ill-health or in a high risk category for developing mental ill-health.

Investment is needed to attract and retain skilled mental health workers.

About us:

Lived Experience Australia is a national mental health advocacy organisation, whose board, staff, and representatives all have lived experience as a mental health consumer, carer, or family member, or a combination of these. Our goal is to ensure that the voice of those who experience mental ill-health in any of these ways is incorporated into policy reform to improve mental health services for all across Australia.

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