

Housing and Mental Health

Mental illness affects the brain and influences the way a person thinks, acts and feels. Bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, eating disorders and personality disorders are forms of mental illness. People with mental illness may experience employment difficulties, hospitalisation and high medical costs, which can put them at risk of becoming homeless. Due to the episodic nature of mental illness, people with mental illness may need different types of accommodation throughout their lives with varying levels of support.

Stats and issues:

- The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 2007 found that 45.5% of Australians aged between 16 and 85 had experienced a mental or substance use disorder at some time in their lives. This is equivalent to 7.3 million people.ⁱ
- One in five West Australians reported experiencing a mental or substance use disorder in the past 12 months.ⁱⁱ This is equivalent to 348,000 people.
- Anxiety and depression are the most common type of mental illness.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Two-thirds of people with a mental illness did not report using services for their disorder.
- Mental illness is widely recognised as a significant health concern, and accounts for 13% of the total disease burden in Australia, coming third behind cancers and cardiovascular disease.
- Young people aged 16-24 are particularly vulnerable to mental disorders. Approximately 26% of young people in WA experience a mental disorder in a given year. Young people with mental disorders are more likely to misuse drugs than those without a mental disorder (36% compared to 7%).^{iv}
- The prevalence of a mental disorder is four times higher among homeless men and women than in the general population.^v
- A survey by SANE found that 47% of respondents were in unsatisfactory accommodation and looking for somewhere else to live. Almost 90% reported having applied for public housing, but had experienced difficulty securing accommodation.^{vi}
- Several studies have shown that when people move to better quality housing, their mental health can improve.^{vii}

Resources:

- **Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL)**
 - P: 1300 555 788 (metro)
 - P: 1800 676 822 (Peel area)
 - P: RuralLink 1800 552 002 (Rural & Remote)
- **Mental Health Commission of WA** P: 6272 1200 W: www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au
- **Office of the Chief Psychiatrist** P: 9222 4462 W: www.chiefpsychiatrist.health.wa.gov.au
- **North Metro Area Health Service** P: 1800 551 800
- **South Metro Area Health Service** P: 1300 362 569
- **WA Association for Mental Health (WAAMH)**
 - P: 9420 7277 W: www.waamh.org.au
- **Mental Health Law Centre** P: 9328 8266 W: www.mhlcwa.org.au
- **Health Consumers Council**
 - P: 9221 3422 or 1800 620 780 W: www.hcc-wa.asn.au
- **Mental Illness Fellowship of WA (MIFWA)** P: 9228 0200 W: www.mifwa.org.au
- **ARAFMI (Mental Health Carers & Friends Association)**
 - P: 9427 7100 or Rural freecall 1800 811 747 W: www.arafmi.asn.au
- **Mental Health Access Service** (Multicultural / Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Info Service)
 - W: [Mental Health Access Service](#)
- **Ruah Community Services** P: 9485 3939 W: www.ruah.com.au
- **Richmond Fellowship of WA** P: 9350 8800 W: www.rfwa.org.au
- **ReachOut**, (for young people) <http://au.reachout.com/>
- **Headspace (WA)** (for young people)
 - P: 9335 6333 or SMS: 0405 533 262 W: <http://www.headspace.org.au/fremantle/>

ⁱ Mental Health Council of Australia (2010), *Mental health fact sheet: statistics on mental health in Australia*, <http://www.mhca.org.au/documents/AboutMentalHealth/FactsonMentalHealth.pdf> [Accessed 9 February 2011]

ⁱⁱ WA Mental Health Commission (2010), *Annual report*, www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au. Australia wide figures reported in Mental Health Council of Australia (2010).

ⁱⁱⁱ Mental Health Council Australia (2009) *Home Truths: Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness*.

^{iv} WA Mental Health Commission (2010), *Annual report*, www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au. Original figures from ABS (2010) 4840.055.011 Mental Health of Young People, 2007.

^v FAHCSIA (2008), *Which way home?: The Australian Government Green Paper on Homelessness*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/news/2008/Pages/WhichWayHome_homelessness.aspx [Accessed 16 February 2011]

^{vi} SANE Australia (2008), *Housing and mental illness*, Research Bulletin 7, <http://www.sane.org> [Accessed 9 February 2011]

^{vii} Robinson, E. and Adams, R. (2008) *Housing stress and the mental health and wellbeing of families*, Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse, No. 12.