



**Mental
Health
Council**
OF TASMANIA

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Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027: Draft Implementation Plan Three (January 2026-June 2027)

Mental Health Council of Tasmania Submission

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The Mental Health Council of Tasmania is supported by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Health.

About Us

The [Mental Health Council of Tasmania](#) (MHCT) is the peak body representing the mental health and wellbeing needs of all Tasmanians, and the community organisations that work with and support them. We work closely with government to amplify the voices of our members and Tasmanian communities, to provide input into public policies and programs. We advocate for reform and improvement within the Tasmanian mental health system. Our purpose is to strengthen and advocate for our communities and service providers to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, and our vision is that every Tasmanian has access to the resources and support needed for good mental health and wellbeing.

Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027: Draft Implementation Plan Three (January 2026- June 2027)

MHCT supports the Strategy's vision of a *compassionate* and *connected* Tasmania where every person feels valued, heard and supported and welcomes the continued commitment to collaborative, community-informed suicide prevention efforts across government, service systems, and communities. MHCT supports the direction of Implementation Plan Three and its emphasis on consolidation, coordination, and community leadership, while highlighting the need for careful consideration of the proposed implementation timeline. We particularly commend the focus on lived experience engagement, community-led initiatives, and improved coordination across sectors. However, we believe several areas would benefit from further strengthening to maximise impact and ensure sustainable, equitable outcomes.

Key strengths of the Implementation Plan

MHCT welcomes the key strengths reflected in the Implementation Plan, particularly its continued commitment to a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to suicide prevention (Priority 5). Suicide is shaped by a complex interplay of social, economic, health, and interpersonal factors, and meaningful coordination across health, housing, justice, education, and community services is essential to address these drivers effectively. The strengthened focus on governance and cross-sector collaboration is therefore a significant strength.

We also strongly support the plan's commitment to embedding lived and living experience leadership throughout implementation (Priority 3). Meaningful inclusion of these voices is

critical to ensuring that suicide prevention initiatives are accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the realities of people experiencing distress. Continued investment in lived experience participation across governance, consultation, and evaluation will be vital.

The emphasis on community-led, place-based initiatives is another major strength, enabling responses to reflect the unique social, cultural, and geographic contexts of Tasmanian communities (Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3). In particular, the development of a community-based suicide prevention evaluation framework will strengthen the evidence base for local initiatives and guide future investment.

Finally, MHCT welcomes the focus on workforce development across clinical, non-clinical, emergency, community, and social service settings (Priority 4). Building the capability and confidence of workers across sectors to recognise and respond to distress is essential for timely support, early intervention, and suicide prevention.

Areas for strengthening

While MHCT broadly supports the Implementation Plan, we recommend strengthening several areas to ensure its long-term effectiveness.

Strengthening the role of the community-managed sector.

Community-managed mental health services play a critical role in suicide prevention through prevention, early intervention, recovery-oriented support, and social connection. MHCT encourages greater recognition of the community-managed sector within the Implementation Plan and recommends:

- ▶ Explicit inclusion of community-managed organisations and incorporating their voices in the strategy as key partners in implementation.
- ▶ Sustainable funding arrangements for community-based suicide prevention programs.
- ▶ Stronger integration between community-managed services and clinical mental health services.
- ▶ Examples are needed for a better understanding such as best practice approaches (see 1.5) and evidence-based suicide prevention initiatives (see 3.3)
- ▶ The role of Primary Health Tasmania (see 2.1), Open Arms (Department of Veterans Affairs) Australian Defence Force (see 3.3) need more clarifications.

Strengthening these partnerships, and explanations with examples will improve clarity, understanding of continuity of care, and ensure that people experiencing distress can access support earlier and in more appropriate settings.

Improving access in rural and regional Tasmania.

People living in rural and regional areas of Tasmania face unique challenges in accessing mental health and suicide prevention services, including workforce shortages, geographic isolation, and transport barriers. While the plan includes expansion of initiatives such as Safe Haven services and improved referral pathways, MHCT recommends further attention to:

- ▶ Service accessibility in rural and remote communities.
- ▶ Digital and telehealth approaches that complement face-to-face services.
- ▶ Local workforce development and retention strategies.

Ensuring equitable access across Tasmania in this implementation plan should remain a core priority.

Strengthening data, research, and evaluation.

MHCT supports the plan's commitment to strengthening data systems, including the Tasmanian Suicide Register and improved evaluation processes. However, further focus is needed in the plan to ensure that data is:

- ▶ Timely and accessible for service planning.
- ▶ Integrated across health, social services, and community systems.
- ▶ Used to inform evidence-based decision making and program improvement.

Partnerships with research institutions, academia and community organisations could further strengthen the evidence base for suicide prevention in Tasmania.

Addressing the social determinants of suicide.

The Implementation Plan acknowledges the role of social disadvantage, isolation, substance use, and relationship stress in suicide risk. MHCT encourages the Tasmanian Government to strengthen actions that address these broader determinants through:

- ▶ Housing stability and homelessness prevention.
- ▶ Employment and financial wellbeing support.
- ▶ Community connection initiatives specially for priority populations (i.e., CALD communities, elderly communities, LGBTQI+ communities etc.).
- ▶ Alcohol and other drug prevention and support programs.

Addressing these upstream drivers is essential in this plan for long-term suicide prevention outcomes.

Supporting culturally safe and inclusive responses.

MHCT supports the emphasis on priority populations, including Aboriginal communities, young people, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ people, CALD communities, and veterans. To strengthen these initiatives, MHCT recommends:

- ▶ Ensuring culturally safe, linguistically and culturally adapted, service delivery models.
- ▶ Supporting community-led, targeted initiatives for priority populations.
- ▶ Providing targeted workforce training in cultural competence and trauma-informed care.

Partnership with communities will be critical to ensuring these initiatives are effective and sustainable.

Allowing adequate time for inclusive consultation and implementation.

While MHCT supports the direction and priorities outlined in the Implementation Plan Three, we note that the proposed timeline of eighteen months for several activities appears ambitious. This extremely limited timeframe may limit opportunities to meaningfully capture the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, including people with lived and living experience, community organisations, priority populations, and regional communities. MHCT recommends allowing adequate time for inclusive engagement processes that ensure diverse voices across Tasmania are heard. Extending consultation and implementation timelines where necessary would support stronger co-design, improve community ownership of initiatives, and ultimately lead to more effective and sustainable suicide prevention outcomes.

Strengthening the role of digital mental health and accessible communication.

MHCT notes that while the Implementation Plan includes a range of service, community, and workforce initiatives, there is limited explicit focus on the role of digital mental health technologies and digital communication strategies in suicide prevention. Digital tools, interventions, and platforms can play an important role in expanding access to information, early intervention supports, and community awareness initiatives, particularly for people in rural and regional areas, younger populations, and those who may face barriers to accessing traditional services. MHCT recommends that the Strategy explore opportunities to:

- ▶ Integrate evidence-based digital mental health interventions into suicide prevention initiatives.
- ▶ Develop accessible digital awareness materials, including short videos, digital flyers, and online campaigns that promote help-seeking and reduce stigma.

- Ensure digital content and services are accessible to people with disability, including people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, through measures such as sign language interpretation, captioned video materials, and inclusive communication formats.

Strengthening digital approaches alongside community-based services could enhance the reach, accessibility, and impact of suicide prevention efforts across Tasmania.

Conclusion

MHCT commends the Tasmanian Government for its continued commitment to suicide prevention through the Compassion and Connection: Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy and the development of Implementation Plan Three. The plan builds on strong foundations established in earlier phases and provides a clear pathway to extend and consolidate suicide prevention efforts across Tasmania. Continued collaboration between government, community organisations, researchers, and people with lived experience will be essential to achieving the Strategy's vision of a compassionate and connected Tasmania. MHCT looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Tasmanian Government and the broader sector to strengthen suicide prevention initiatives and improve mental health outcomes for all Tasmanians.