

# BEING

## 2019 ELECTION PLATFORM

Australia's political parties' commitment  
to mental health support in the 2019  
federal election

## Acknowledgements

Being would like to thank all people with lived/ living experience of mental health issues for their strength and courage to challenge and face each day. You are the driving force of the work we do at Being. Your voice matters and is greatly valued.

In particular, we would like to thank each individual who attended the election platform meetings, and who generously shared with us their experiences and perspectives which shaped Being's election platform.

We would also like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land where our election meetings took place.

For further information on Being's election platform, please contact Irene Gallagher (CEO) or Peter Schmiedgen (Policy and Communications Manager) via the following:

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## Warning for a graphic depiction of mental health.

Individuals with lived/living experiences of mental health issues are warned that the following document contains information that may be distressing. Mental health, suicide and self-harm are topics that are discussed in the document.

If you are feeling distressed by the content of this material, support is available through the following channels:

Support is available from 24-hour crisis support lines:

- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467
- Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
- Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800
- Mensline Australia: 1300 789 978
- Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463
- NSW Rape Crisis Centre: 1800 424 017

## Being | Mental Health & Wellbeing Consumer Advisory Group

Being | Mental Health & Wellbeing Consumer Advisory Group is the independent, state-wide peak organisation for people with lived/living experience of mental health issues. We work with this core population of people to achieve and support systemic change.

Being's vision is for all people with a lived experience of mental health issues to participate as valued citizens in the communities they choose. Participation is a fundamental human right as enshrined in Article 25 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR). We work from the premise that the participation of consumers results in more effective public policy and facilitates individual recovery.

Our work is guided by six principles:

- Creating space for people with lived / living experience of mental health issues to have their voices heard
- Ensuring that recovery-oriented and trauma-informed practice underpins all aspects of Being's operation
- The belief that services and a life free of stigma and discrimination are the human rights of every person
- Providing capacity-building opportunities for all people with lived / living experience to grow
- Ensuring that everything that Being does is led by persons with lived/living experience of mental health issues.

Being is an independent non-government organisation that receives core funding from the Mental Health Commission of NSW.

## Executive Introduction

A big thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to both of our election platform meetings. We would also like to thank the many who joined us and participated in the Facebook live streaming event, which was a first for Being

In this election platform, we have brought together an overview of the commitments made by the major federal political parties in relation to mental health and listed key issues that were discussed during the election platform meetings.

When the election was announced, Being contacted the major parties and many of the minor parties for comments on their mental health policy. These responses have been included where appropriate throughout this document. This document does not provide an exhaustive list of all relevant parties policies, only the comments they have provided to us at the point of publication. Further information about parties' policies will be included at the end of the document for you to research.

We hope that this document will provide a clearer picture of the current political climate in relation to mental health and the key political parties positioning in this area.

## Trauma-informed care and training for all

Participants of Being's election platform meetings highlighted the need for all staff across the mental health sector to have trauma-informed care training if the best possible support is to be provided to people living with mental health issues. In our member discussions, it was evident that all persons, including service providers, would be assisted if incoming governments made stronger commitments to ongoing trauma-informed care training and implementation.

At present, continual trauma-informed care training requirements have not been explicitly committed to by any of the major parties at either a state or federal level.

Being will continue to advocate to future Governments on the importance of trauma-informed care and the need for compulsory and continual training for mental health clinicians.

The National Party of Australia has recognised the need for trauma informed training and care especially in relation to developing Indigenous leadership and mental health support.

The Australian Greens have committed to increasing training and ongoing support through fully-funded plans for free undergraduate university and TAFE.

## Increase the number of lived experience workers across the mental health sector

The Peer Workforce has expertise and understanding that comes from having a lived/living experience of mental health issues (Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, 2014, p. 100). We recommend that all parties include targets for increasing the lived experience workforce. This includes developing strategies to train and certify the lived experience workforce and to provide career pathways for lived experience workers.

The National Party of Australia has committed \$11.8 million in a range of initiatives, which include enhancing peer support networks.

The Australian Greens have committed to increasing numbers of lived experience workers through their fully-funded plans for free undergraduate university and TAFE. They have also committed to providing \$166 million to fund a two-year national peer workforce trial with 1,000 places from 1 July 2019.

## Protecting mental health advocacy and access to justice

Being is aware that there are many aspects of the mental health system where people fall through the gaps and do not receive adequate treatment. When situations like this arise, it is important for consumers to be able to access avenues of justice. To better support mental health consumer rights, the members of Being believe that New South Wales should have an independent mental health complaints commissioner along similar lines to the model already adopted in Victoria. At present in NSW the complaints of people living with mental health issues are not addressed with the specialist understanding required. Being would like to see a separate Mental Health Complaints service be implemented in New South Wales.

Further to this Being, in alliance with the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC) and Consumers of Mental Health Western Australia (CoMHWA), is advocating for a representative national peak body for all mental health consumers that can address issues of concern to people with lived/living experience across Australia, such as the challenges of accessing NDIS funding for people with psychosocial disabilities.

The Australian Greens have committed to ensuring that not-for-profits advocating on mental health issues have secure funding and protections.

## Awareness training around specific group needs

Being understands that there are many elements which make up a person's individual recovery journey and identity and that specific groups within the community have specific needs which must be acknowledged and addressed. Mental health care cannot be a one size fits all approach and it is important that services have a clear understanding of individual needs to support individual recovery journeys.

From discussions with our members, Being are aware that there are specific sensitivities around aged, youth, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and LGBTQI+ and around newly arising special needs groups such as refugees and young veterans.

The National Party of Australia have committed \$1.45 billion this financial year for Primary Health Networks to tailor mental health services to their communities. They

have also provided \$125 million the Million Minds Mission to assist research and implementation of new mental health treatments. They have also committed \$34.1 million to Indigenous youth suicide prevention.

The Australian Greens stated that in developing systemic reform for the mental health system, they ensured perspectives of people with mental health issues were at the forefront of design, development, monitoring and evaluation.

## General Practitioners and Mental health

### Improved mental health training for General Practitioners.

In 2017 and 2018 people visited their GP's for mental health advice more than any other health concern (Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, 2018). Being understands the importance of General Practitioners as a point of entry and a support system for people living with mental health issues. For this reason, we believe that general practitioners must have better mental health training, but it is also imperative that General Practitioners should have some understanding of recovery focussed and trauma-informed care principles.

The National Party of Australia has committed \$448.5 million in funding and service models to support GP's to enhance care for their patients. Within this training GP's will also be trained on how to provide a range of services electronically to serve various needs.

The Australian Greens have committed to increasing training for all hospital workers, mental health workers, and first responders through their free undergraduate and TAFE policy.

### Diverse treatment options are made readily available.

Being believes that Australia should follow the example set by the United Kingdom in connecting consumers of mental health services with social, community and peer-run services as part of a holistic treatment plan. 'Social prescribing' is the methodology utilised in the UK to link an individual with social and community-based activities which may help to reduce their isolation and increase their social and emotional empowerment.

Social interaction and increased activity have been linked strongly to better physical and mental health for individuals living with mental health issues. 'Social prescribing' has had positive impacts on those who have received it in conjunction with the biomedical treatments primarily utilised in the United Kingdom and continues to play a part in the United Kingdom's National Health Service treatment options.

In recommending the development of a model for social prescribing in Australia, Being believes that it is integral to include the valuable assistance of lived experience workers as a connection point between services and where appropriate as alternatives to biomedical models of care. In developing the scheme lived experience workers would be able to create meaningful bonds with both the person accessing socially prescribed services but also with the community and council groups that facilitate such endeavours. Alternatives to biomedical models could include peer-run drop-in centres as alternatives to current crisis management models, such as emergency room visits.

The National Party of Australia has committed \$11.8 million to community initiatives to assist parents and young people in improving their mental health skills training, and boost counselling support services.

The Australian Greens have committed to providing a \$500 million grant funding opportunities for communities to implement assertive outreach programs. Further Improving services for young people in crisis by providing \$25 million over the next four years for a trial of 50,000 children and young adults to access 10 group sessions of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy;

### Implementation of mental health check-up systems.

Being believes that there should be a system integrated into all community medical facilities that provide regular and routine emotional health checks for adults. Creating and implementing a mental health check will strengthen early intervention and preventative assistance.

### Community mental health care

### Ending stigma around mental health

Being, members have continually expressed the role that stigma can have in preventing them from being included with elements of their communities, and the impact this can have on their lives. In agreement with *Living Well Strategic Plan for*

2014-2024, Being will advocate to reduce stigma in all facets of life and social interaction.

The Australian Labor Party has committed \$15 million to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare for improved data on self-harm and suicide. They have also committed \$11.5 million to the National Mental Health Commission for the National Mental Health Workplace initiative.

The National Party of Australia has committed \$11.5 million to the National Mental Health Workplace initiative to assist all businesses in implementing mentally healthy workplaces.

The Australian Greens have committed to creating an anti-stigma campaign that is evidence-based, effective and works to benefit the whole community. As part of this, they are providing \$10 million in funding for a youth mental health stigma strategy. Further to this, they have committed to a \$13 million for a National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 2019.

## Increased Community support systems

Being, in agreement with the principles of the *Living Well Strategic Plan for 2014-2024*, believes that more needs to be done to support people with lived experience of mental health issues to live productively in their communities. Developing social prescribing and initiatives such as the current Federal Governments' Head to Health digital platform are steps in the right direction.

From our discussions, many people returning to the community after inpatient stays feel they are falling through the gaps. The current lack of a more supportive follow-up system in-particular has significant impacts.

The Australian Labor Party has stated their support of \$114.5 million for eight adult mental health centres and invest \$197 million in a historic trial of headspace Plus community-based hubs for young people.

The National Party of Australia have committed to providing \$114.5 million to trial eight new adult mental health centres to provide walk-in treatment and advice.

The Australian Greens have committed to providing an additional \$450 million for community psychosocial services to help bridge the gap in essential services for people who can't access the NDIS.

## Increased training for first responders/emergency workers engaging with the community.

Being believes that emergency responder training in relation to mental health issues is of vital importance for people living with mental health issues to improve the quality of service provision. Better training will also ensure that first responders are better able to care for their own psychological wellbeing despite the psychological challenges and risks of their own work.

The Australian Greens have committed to supporting first responders with mental health training through their free undergraduate university and TAFE policy.

## Inpatient mental health care

### Elimination of Seclusion and Restraint.

Being believes that any future government must continue the work to reduce seclusion and restraint, with the goal of ultimately eliminating the use of seclusion and restraint against people with lived experience of mental health issues. Many of Being's constituents are strongly supportive of moving towards the goal of eliminating seclusion and restraint in favour of other alternatives such as sensory stimulation rooms.

The Australian Greens have committed to reducing seclusion and restraint, so the practice is only used in hospital settings as a last resort for people with mental health issues. They have committed to ending the use of physical and chemical restraints in aged care and believe this practice should also end in mental health care.

### Alternatives to forced medication where possible

Mental Health service consumers have the same human rights as every other individual, however, when accessing such services, consumers can be exposed to 'unbounded discretionary power to force vulnerable patients to take medication whenever staff believe it is appropriate.' (Justice Action, 2018).

Being believes there is an increasing need for consumer autonomy and the development of alternative practices that follow a human-centred approach, such as broader use of supported decision making in mental health contexts. These would

supplement the work already done within the mental health system to support and protect the rights of people with lived/living experience, such as the NSW Official Visitors Program.

Being have requested comments from the political parties and are awaiting reply.

## Alternatives to current crisis care models

Being believes that there is a need to develop alternatives to the current crisis care models as these have left some people with lived/living experience traumatised, rather than supported. . One example of the sort of model that could be helpful in this context is the Safe Haven café model which originates from Britain and is currently being trialled by St Vincent's Melbourne.

The National Party of Australia have committed to providing \$114.5 million to trial eight new adult mental health centres to provide an alternative to presenting at hospital emergency departments. Further, they have committed \$110 million to continue the Early Psychosis Youth Services program at selected headspace centres to provide specialist clinical services for young people.

The Australian Greens have committed to providing \$25 million over the next four years for a trial of 50,000 children and young adults to access 10 group sessions of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. They have also committed to increasing community programs and outreach with a grant funding of \$500 million.

## The National Disability Insurance Scheme

### Changing the language to be more inclusive of persons with psychosocial disability.

In the *Mind, the Gap* report the language and application processes of the National Disability Insurance Scheme were found to be confusing and at times even distressing for people with lived/living experience of mental health issues (The University of Sydney, 2018). Being has been advised by numerous people who experience mental health issues that the definition of persistent disability used by the NDIS has made it challenging for people with severe and episodic psychosocial disabilities to access funding support.

Being are advocating for a change in the language used, including making the definition of disability more recovery orientated and trauma-informed. Because the language of the NDIS focuses on 'life-long' or permanent disabilities; many people with psychosocial disabilities either don't apply for or are refused NDIS funding.

The Australian Greens have stated they are committed to ensuring the NDIS is more accessible and reliable for people with psychosocial disability

### Improving NDIS transition processes.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is only available to persons who are between the ages of 7 and 65 years old. This leaves a gap of service and funding specifically for people over the age of 65, who are just as entitled to such services as the age range population. There are further concerns for people over 65 who are transitioning into Aged Care facilities. Transition periods and challenges negotiating them are confusing to many NDIS recipients who live with mental health issues.

Being believes that there needs to be clearer communication on what is and is not covered by the NDIS and that those who are receiving NDIS funding are adequately assisted with transitioning into and out of services.

The Australian Labor Party have committed to ensuring psychosocial support during and after the transition in the NDIS. They have stated their commitment to establishing a NDIS Future Fund, invest \$40 million to local NDIS workforce trials and developing a national workforce strategy, and expand the capacity of the National Disability Insurance Agency to support psychosocial disability by removing staff caps.

The National Party of Australia has committed \$20 million to expand the NDIS Community Connectors Program which provides communities the ability to have community guidance on accessing, planning and implementing NDIS plans.

### Improving the accessibility of administrative and appeals processes.

In providing improved access to NDIS funding for people living with psychosocial disabilities it is also integral that appropriately skilled staff and funding are made available to support users of NDIS funded services to advocate for themselves when service standards are inadequate. This is also a key context in which skilled peer workers would be invaluable.

Many people accessing NDIS funding have experienced long time delays between application and acceptance, and then further time delays between acceptance of a

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BEING is a not for profit organisation which receives core and some project funding from the Mental Health Commission of NSW

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funding offer and an initial planning meeting. Due to time delays, and issues with the services provided to individuals, many find themselves not receiving the care and support they initially required and requested. This has been shown in the increased level of complaints being brought against the NDIS.

With an increased number of complaints within the service, it is also important that complaints processes, which are often challenging for people with psychosocial disabilities to access are made as accessible as possible. Apart from increased staffing and funding for the proper provision of service, there also needs to be a clear definition of the rights which persons wishing to complain are entitled to. Advocacy services linked to the NDIS on consumer rights should be welcomed by the NDIS and supported by future Governments.

## Where to find more information

### Liberal Party of Australia

[www.liberal.org.au/our-plan/](http://www.liberal.org.au/our-plan/)

### Australian Labor Party

[www.alp.org.au/campaigns/](http://www.alp.org.au/campaigns/)

### The Australian Greens

[www.greens.org.au/policies](http://www.greens.org.au/policies)

### The National Party of Australia

[www.nationals.org.au/policies/2019-election-policies/](http://www.nationals.org.au/policies/2019-election-policies/)

### Pauline Hanson's One Nation

[www.onenation.org.au/policies](http://www.onenation.org.au/policies)

### Animal Justice Party

[www.animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist/humans](http://www.animaljusticeparty.org/policieslist/humans)

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