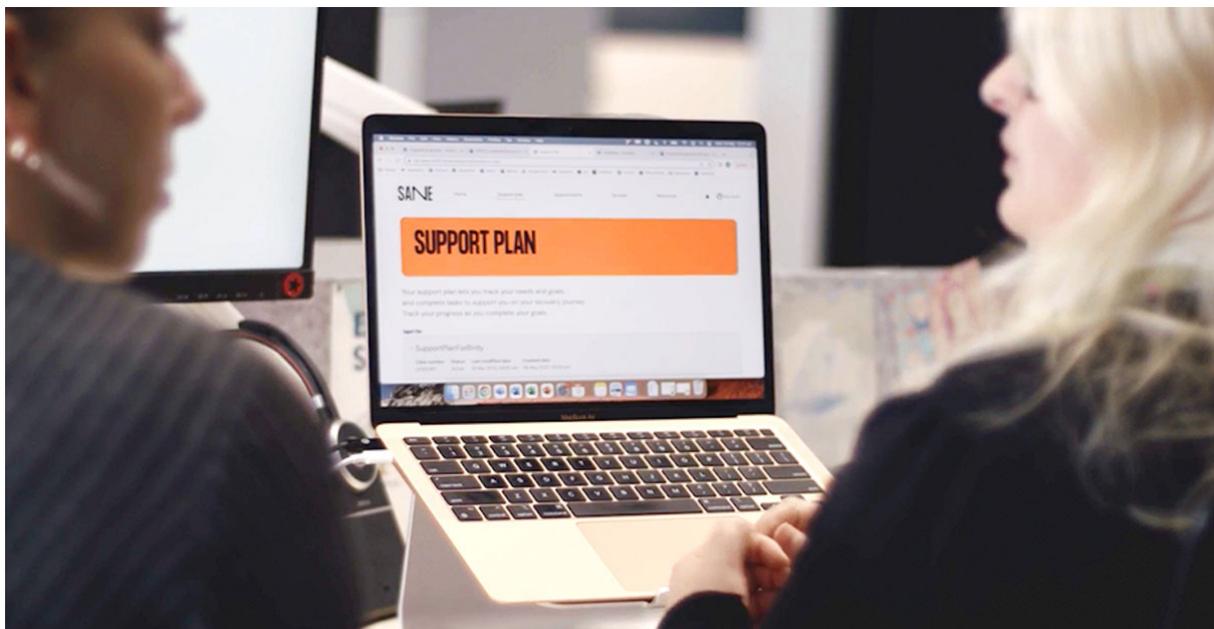


MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 0001 Tuesday 7 June 2022

New digital service launches to help bridge gaps in fragmented mental health system



Australians with complex mental health issues are set to benefit from the country's first digital and telephone service that provides *ongoing* mental health support designed specifically for them.

Developed and delivered by leading complex mental health organisation **SANE**, this new service provides guided support for people with issues like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or OCD. The service is also built for the autistic community and those with intellectual disability seeking mental health support.

Participants will have their own personalised programs of online or over the phone counselling and peer support as well as recovery activities, such as online community forums, social groups and art sessions – all via a new digital participant portal.

According to the Federal Government's Productivity Commission, more than 150,000 Australians are currently missing out on vital psychosocial support

services that could help them manage daily activities, increase social connection, and improve their quality of life.

SANE CEO, Rachel Green, says this free service will help bridge that gap in psychosocial support as well as providing critical support to people currently on waiting lists for clinical services.

"The service we are launching today builds on 36 years of experience in complex mental health – people have told us what they need, and we understand the unique set of challenges they face," says Ms Green.

"In Australia, the road to treatment and support for people with complex mental health needs is littered with congestion, diversions and roadblocks.

"People are facing longer waiting lists for help than ever before. Some people can't afford care and others are simply being forgotten – or told it's not severe enough yet to warrant more support.

"We know thousands need a support service that is more than a one-off counselling session; a service that provides continuity and connects them to others who can help make sense of what they're going through and support them through tough times."

The new support service provided by SANE is currently available for self-referral and referral by a health professional in selected regions across Australia.

"When a person is referred, they are welcomed, befriended and supported in a way that works for them and their recovery. And, in an Australian-first, we are providing much-needed ongoing support over a period of weeks or months, including welcoming participants to our online communities," continued Ms Green.

"People will have access to counselling, peer support, group activities and health information, all through a best-in-class digital platform designed for them to easily access what they need, when they need it."

The service is delivered with the support of pilot funding under a grant from the Australian Government.

People can check their eligibility and join the service at sane.org/referral.

-ends-

Notes to editors:

- Interviews are available with SANE employees and people with lived experience of complex mental health issues; contact details are below.
- Media reporting on mental health issues should read through evidence-based reporting guidelines: [click here for the guidelines \(Mindframe\)](#).
- Video and images assets are available from the media team.

Facts and evidence:

- There are 880,000 with complex mental health issues in Australia – [source here \(AIHW\)](#).
- In 2020, the Productivity Commission said that 154,000 people were missing out on psychosocial support. [Source here \(Productivity Commission Inquiry Report, Volume 3\)](#).
- A February 2022 survey of 1400 psychologists by the Australian Psychological Society (APS) found most psychologists had experienced increased demand for their services, with one in three unable to take new clients (up from one in 100 pre-pandemic). [Source here \(APS\)](#).

About SANE

SANE is the leading national mental health organisation for people with persistent, recurring or complex mental health issues and trauma. It provides a range of free digital and telehealth services to support them and their families.

Led by the voices of its community, SANE drives change to improve the lives of those living with complex mental health and end stigma and discrimination. Find out more at: www.sane.org.

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Availability:

In 5 regions currently:

Central Queensland, Wide bay and the Sunshine Coast region, including:

- Rockhampton
- Emerald
- Gladstone
- Bundaberg
- Hervey Bay
- Maryborough
- Gympie
- Blackwater
- Gayndah
- Noosa
- Fraser Island
- Biloela

North West Melbourne, including:

- Sunbury
- Mt Macedon
- Craigieburn
- Werribee
- Melton
- Sunshine
- Williamstown
- City of Melbourne

ACT (in its entirety)

Central and Eastern suburbs of Sydney, including:

- City of Sydney
- Riverwood
- Heathcote
- Kurnell
- Bundeena

Brisbane North, including:

- City of Sydney
- Riverwood
- Heathcote
- Kurnell
- Bundeena