

## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR MULTICULTURAL PEOPLE

### QUICK FACTS

Australia is a diverse country, with people from many different cultures, backgrounds, religions, and ethnicities. Anyone can experience distress or mental health issues. It's important that every Australian has the opportunity to live a full life, free of discrimination and with access to help when they need it.

- In the last census almost half of all Australians were either born overseas or had a parent who was born overseas.
- Immigrants are under-represented among people who use mental health services in Australia.
- Refugees and asylum seekers have low access to mental health services.

### COMMON CHALLENGES

Stressful events around migration, seeking asylum, and discrimination can impact wellbeing and mental health for individuals, families, and communities. These can include:

- Separation from cultural identity and loss of close family ties
- Being exposed to trauma prior to migration
- Stress associated with migration
- Experiences of racism and discrimination
- Detention of asylum seekers
- Lack of culturally appropriate services
- Stigma around mental health within communities
- Language barriers
- Uncertainty of visa status
- Unfamiliarity with the Australian mental health system and processes.

## WHEN TO GET HELP

Professional support can help people cope with these stressful situations. Talking to a trusted person also helps many people feel less alone.

If you notice any of the following experiences, and they are impacting your daily life, telling someone you trust or a health professional can be the first step to seeking support:

- Changes to sleeping or appetite
- Feeling lonely, isolated, or not good enough
- Changes in behaviour – more alcohol or substance use
- Thinking about harming yourself or ending your life
- Hearing or sensing things that may not be real
- Not doing things you used to enjoy
- Not taking care of personal hygiene or your usual daily tasks
- Talking or socialising less than previously
- Having thoughts that are confused or very disorganised.

## HELP FOR FAMILY & FRIENDS

It's common for family members to take on a caring role for someone going through mental health issues.

There are services that support family, friends, and carers and provide a way of connecting with others who may share your experience:

- [Mental Health Carers Australia](#) - 1300 554 660
- [Carer Gateway](#) - 1800 422 737
- [SANE Friends, Family & Carers Online Forum](#)

## RACISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

Experiences of racism cause distress and adversely affects mental health in immigrants and refugees.

If you have experienced racial discrimination, you can report it to the Australian Human Rights Commission. Call 1300 656 419.

## REFERENCES

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). [2016 Census: Multicultural.](#)

Ferdinand, A. S., Paradies, Y., & Gelaber, M. (2015). [Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: a cross-sectional survey.](#) *BMC Public Health*, 15.

Minas, H., Kakuma, R., Too, L. S., Vayani, H., Orapeleng, S., Prasad-Ildes, R., Turner, G., Procter, N., & Oehm, D. (2013). [Mental Health Research and Evaluation in Multicultural](#)

### **FINDING SUPPORT IN YOUR AREA**

There are many services available across Australia which can help with your mental health. Some can connect you with other people going through similar experiences or support services in your community.