

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023

This International Women's Day, SANE recognises the need for innovation in creating a gender-equal future, and in particular the critical role technology can play in creating an inclusive, accessible and equitable mental health system for all women.

The National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing showed that one in four Australian women aged between 16-85 were diagnosed with a mental disorder in 2020-21, with the most reported being anxiety disorders including social phobia and PTSD.

Women disproportionately experience sexism, violence, abuse and financial insecurity, increasing their risk of trauma. We are committed to ensure the voices of women influence how we deliver our services.

These issues are further compounded by the findings in SANE's recent *Bridging the Gaps survey* which also found that women seeking mental health care experienced challenges with affordability (53%), waiting lists times (34%) and a lack of access to the right providers to support their recovery (18%).

"Having experienced domestic violence for 28 years I have found accessing help in the mental health space to be very hard. There seems to be a lack of education and understanding about PTSD, DV and trauma. Repeating my "story" to different services is triggering, staff appear very uncomfortable with the DV, and services don't follow up." - *Bridging the Gaps survey* participant.

The use of digital technology is one way we can ensure women have equitable and affordable access to mental health care, no matter what circumstances they are living under.

During the week, we spoke with Myra, SANE's Head of Information Technology and Emma, SANE's Counselling Manager and Thalia, a counsellor at SANE, to give some insight into how innovation is ensuring equitable mental health care for women in our community.

Myra says we have seen the benefits of digital technology to provide support and increased access to the life-changing connection, community, continuity and contribution that we know women with complex mental health needs rely on.

"SANE's services do not see gender as a factor for access," she said.

According to Emma, trauma-informed care is at the heart of SANE services.

"After experiencing trauma, women are significantly more likely to develop PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders than men. All service delivery staff undergo

trauma-informed care training so that they are well-equipped to provide safe, trustworthy and collaborative care that provides choice and is empowering.”

Counsellors and peer support workers use a person-centred approach to holistically bring together various aspects of a person’s life including their social, emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual health.”

Our digital and telephone support services are free and ensure that we can reach those most in need to help address the inequity in Australia’s fragmented mental health systems.

Thalia (she/they), a Counsellor at SANE, also said that SANE's digital services naturally offer an inclusive space for all by bridging the gaps for so many women unable to access services they need, and at the root advocating for systemic change and equity for all.

“Our counselling and peer support workers understand complex mental health conditions and are trauma informed.”

To learn more about SANE support services, click [here](#).