

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until 0700 Tuesday 7 June 2022

New digital service launches in ACT for complex mental health needs

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

Developed and delivered by national complex mental health organisation **SANE**, this new guided service will support 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 and over the phone counselling and peer support activities, such as online community forums, social groups and art sessions – all via a new digital participant portal.

CEO at SANE, Rachel Green, says this free service will provide people in this area with critical support 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.

"People in our guided service 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."

As part of an Australian Government-funded pilot, Capital Health is one of five Primary Health Networks in Australia where people can join the service through a health professional referral or self-referral.

Capital Health Network CEO, Megan Cahill, said they were pleased to see additional mental health services being made available to Canberrans.

“We’re so pleased that Canberrans who are affected by complex mental health issues, including family members and carers, can access new free support online or by phone through SANE,” said Ms Cahill.

“Canberrans can talk with a mental health professional to develop a personalised support plan. This tailored plan may include one-on-one counselling, peer groups or events.”

Rachel Greed added: “We know thousands need a support service that is more than a one-off counselling session. People need 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.”

Head to SANE’s Referral Hub for more information: sane.org/referral

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Notes to editors:

- The Capital Health Primary Health Network includes the following area. [Visit the Australian Government’s Find Your PHN site to interact with the map.](#)



- The SANE Digital Portal received funding from the Australian Government.
- 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 the evidence-based reporting guidelines: [click here for the guidelines \(Mindframe\)](#).
- We have a range of video, audio and images available. [See here](#).

Evidence:

- There are 880,000 people with complex mental health issues in Australia –**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**
- 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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