A Joint Statement by the Prevention Coalition in Mental Health
Building a Strong and Sustainable
Preventive Mental Health System for Australia.

Despite steadily increasing investment in mental healthcare services over the last few decades, the prevalence of mental health conditions in Australia is rising rather than falling, services are struggling to keep up with demand, and individual, government and societal costs are escalating. The pandemic and recent natural disasters have further exacerbated a crisis in mental health.

While a dramatic increase in mental healthcare spending is needed, upstream investment in primary prevention is also critical to managing the crisis.

Australia already has a highly distinguished track record in the field of preventive health. As a nation we have eradicated smallpox, eliminated polio, and controlled HIV. We have also reduced the prevalence of cigarette smoking and dramatically reduced the incidence of heart attacks, strokes, certain cancers and road deaths.

Over the last two years we have responded strongly to COVID-19 and averted tens of thousands of deaths through the use of an evidence-based, prevention-focused response.

With the release of the National Preventive Health Strategy and the inclusion of promoting and protecting mental health and reducing alcohol and other drug harm as key focus areas in the Strategy, there is now a huge opportunity to achieve similar success in mental health.

The Prevention Coalition in Mental Health's Primed for Prevention Consensus Statement, released in 2020, outlines the types of programs and policies that can be used to prevent the onset of common mental health conditions.

Many of these initiatives – like universal access to parenting programs, the use of evidence-based social and emotional learning, resilience and anti-bullying programs in schools and workplace mental wellbeing initiatives – are gradually being included in government policy.

But many others are required.

Ultimately, success require a multimodal approach delivered at scale to create a critical level of collective impact. The more evidence-based programs and policies we have, and the more touch points there are within each community, the more likely we will see significant reductions in the incidence of mental health conditions.

Achieving this also rests on creating a robust preventive mental health system that can enable the development and delivery of prevention initiatives in a planned, efficient, coordinated, impactful and sustainable way.

Mental health conditions are not inevitable, and it *is* possible to prevent or at least substantially delay the onset of many common mental health conditions.

The Prevention Coalition in Mental Health therefore calls on all political parties and candidates to make the primary prevention of mental health conditions a core pillar of their mental health policy.

For more information go to https://preventionunited.org.au/advocacy/preventioncoalition/