

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Tasmanians living with mental illness to help shape new support services

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Tasmanians with severe, episodic mental illness have the chance to shape new support services designed to help them meet the demands of daily life.

Primary Health Tasmania has received new Australian Government funding under the PHN Program for psychosocial support services to improve the health of Tasmanians with mental illnesses that are serious, but don't permanently reduce their day-to-day functioning.

This means the person may be able to manage things like work, relationships and money, but need short-term assistance when their illness intensifies.

To make sure the new services meet people's needs, Primary Health Tasmania has opened an online survey specifically designed to find out what support measures help people get through their tougher times.

The consumer survey wants to find out what barriers to existing services the person may have encountered, as well what typically contributes to their illness disrupting their daily life and wellbeing.

Surveys have also been created to capture valuable feedback from carers, GPs and social service and mental health care providers, with focus groups also scheduled to take place.

Primary Health Tasmania is working with the mental health consumer organisation Flourish, Mental Health Carers Tasmania, Carers Tasmania and the Mental Health Council of Tasmania as well as service providers to make sure the new services meet local needs.

Flourish spokesperson Julia Westland – who was diagnosed with recurring depression in her mid-20s – says gathering insights from people with lived experience of acute mental illness is critical to creating services that can make a real difference to their everyday lives.

“Having input and working alongside other people towards change is just so important to someone's wellbeing and self-esteem,” the 58-year-old said.

“It gives you hope, and a sense that you are valuable and important – you may not be well at times, but you're still contributing.”

Primary Health Tasmania's mental health spokesperson, Grant Akesson, hopes the new services will act as a safety net to ensure someone's life isn't derailed by the unpredictable nature of their illness.

“These services are about making sure people who can, most of the time, get on with daily life aren't waylaid when their symptoms temporarily become acute,” he said.

[www.primaryhealthtas.com.au](http://www.primaryhealthtas.com.au)

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“Hearing direct from those who live with this sort of illness will help us design the targeted support they need to get through those challenging periods.”

Following this consultation, Primary Health Tasmania will undertake a tender process for the new statewide services, which the Australian Government has provided \$1.7 million to establish and fund until June 2021.

The new services are expected to be up and running in early 2019 and will be available for people who aren't already using existing psychosocial services and aren't eligible for or assisted by the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Consumers, carers, GPs and services providers can have their say at [www.engagepht.com.au](http://www.engagepht.com.au). The surveys close on 14 September.

*Primary Health Tasmania is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation working to connect care and keep Tasmanians well and out of hospital. It was established on 1 July 2015 under the Australian Government's Primary Health Networks Program to support and enable a coordinated, primary care-focused health system.*

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