

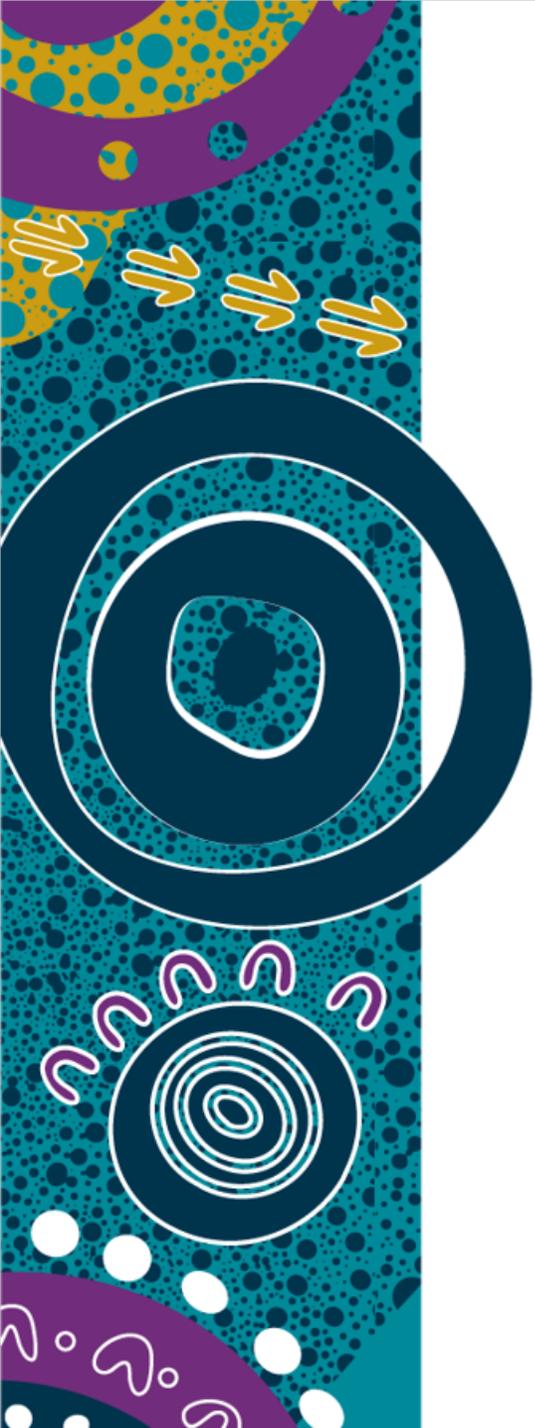
Mental Health Commissioner

FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Equally Well - From Preaching to the Converted to Driving Real Change

Taimi Allan





Ngadlu tampinhi ngadlu Kurna yartanka inparrinhi

The Commissioners office acknowledges and respects the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and that we are visitors on the unceded lands of the Kurna people. We recognise their deep connection and relationship they have with land, waters and sky where we live, work and socialise. We pay our respects to their Elders and value their past, present and emerging leaders and the importance of their spiritual and cultural beliefs.

We also recognise all those with lived wisdom and the enormous contribution this has to systemic change for our future generations.

WHO'S MY MOB?

Parent, Foodie, Performer, Glass Blower,
Gin Distiller, Social Justice Warrior



The Drivers of Inequities

Health Systems

(Financial & structural barriers, prejudice & discrimination)

Workforce issues

(Diagnostic Overshadowing)

Exposure to 'Commercial Determinants'

(Smoking, AOD, physical activity, poor nutrition)

Psychotropic Medication

(Obesity, CVD, Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome)

Socio-economic status

(Social determinants)

Adverse childhood experiences

(Abuse, neglect, dysfunction)

Taking Action

Health Systems >
Integrate practice
Address Prejudice
& discrimination

Workforce Issues >
Address
diagnostic
overshadowing

Exposure to Commercial
Determinants
**Legislation and
Policy (not “bad
choices”)**

Psychotropic Medication >
**Prescribe for
wellbeing**

Socio-economic status >
Support
employment
aspirations

Adverse Childhood
Experiences >
**Trauma informed
care**

Taking Action

Health Systems >
Integrate practice
Address Prejudice
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Workforce Issues >
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Exposure to Commercial
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care

My Overshadowing Experiences

- The Thyroid Storm
- The Manic Episode
- Champagne and Insurance
- “You have a stressful job”



A stylized illustration of a pregnant woman's silhouette in dark blue. The fetus is depicted in a simplified, colorful style with orange, blue, and white tones. The woman's hands are visible, resting on her belly. The background is a light, warm yellow.

A True Story

- “Katie”, 26, a Peer Support Worker, had a history of schizo-affective disorder and delusions.
- She went to the doctor because she thought she was pregnant.
- After a negative pregnancy test, her psychiatric meds were adjusted.
- She died two weeks after they found, too late, a tumor the size of a basketball in her stomach.

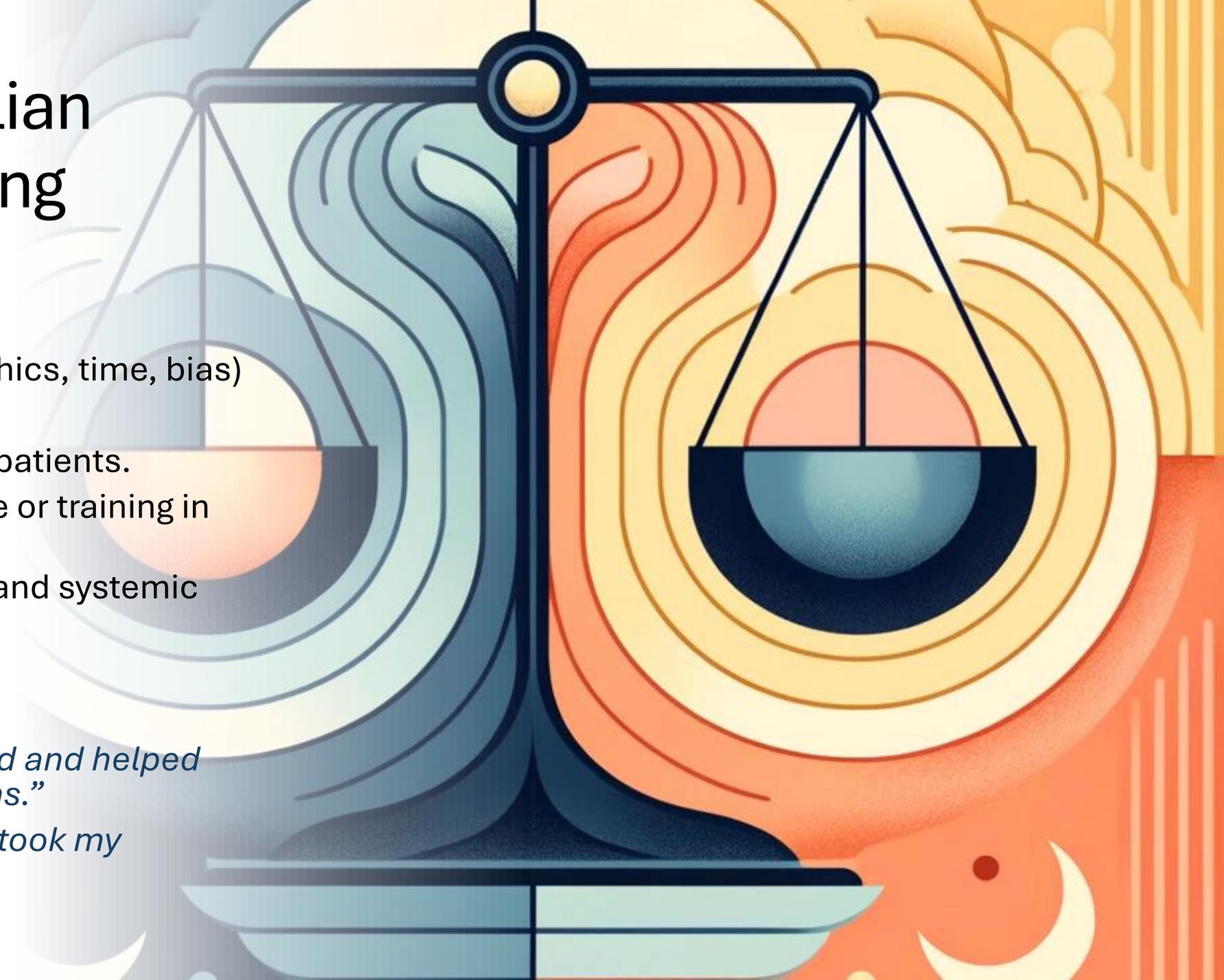
South Australian Overshadowing Survey

- Limitations (demographics, time, bias)
- Challenges:
 - Limited time with patients.
 - Lack of experience or training in specialist areas.
 - High patient load and systemic pressures.

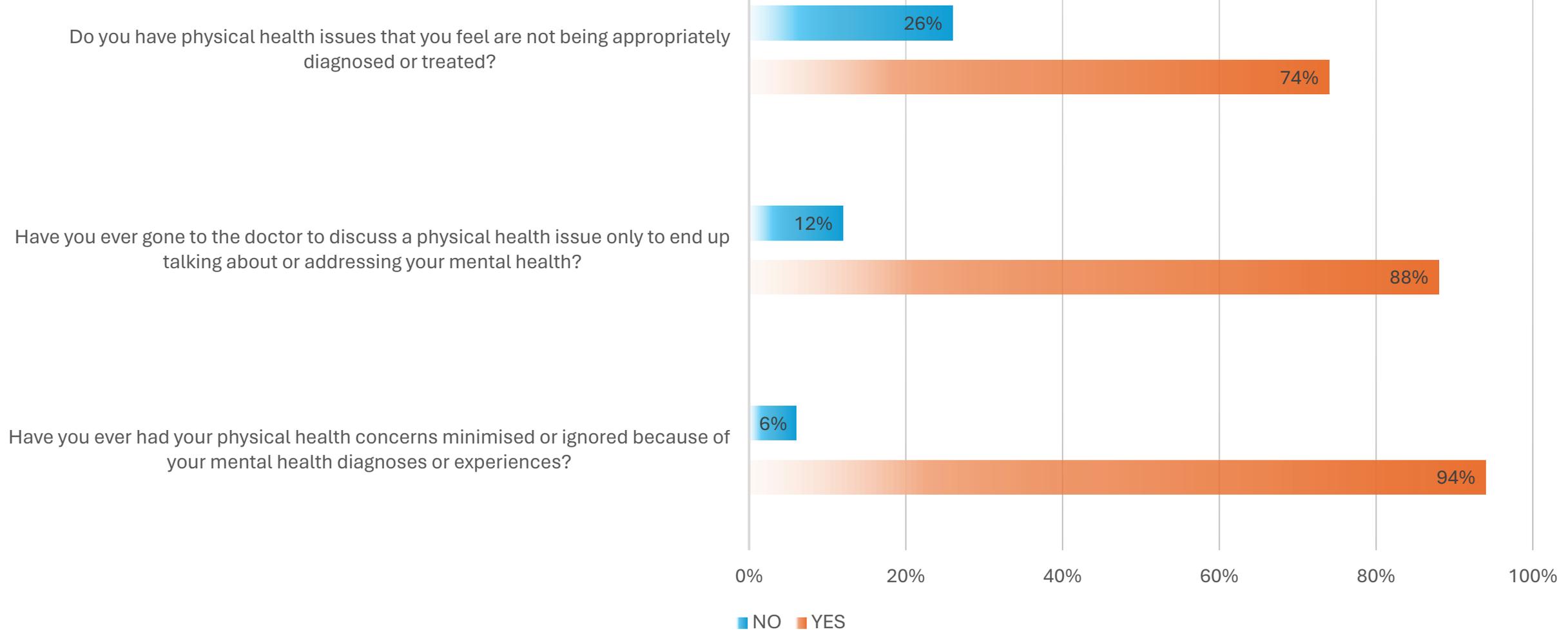
- Positive Stories:

"My doctor finally listened and helped me manage my symptoms."

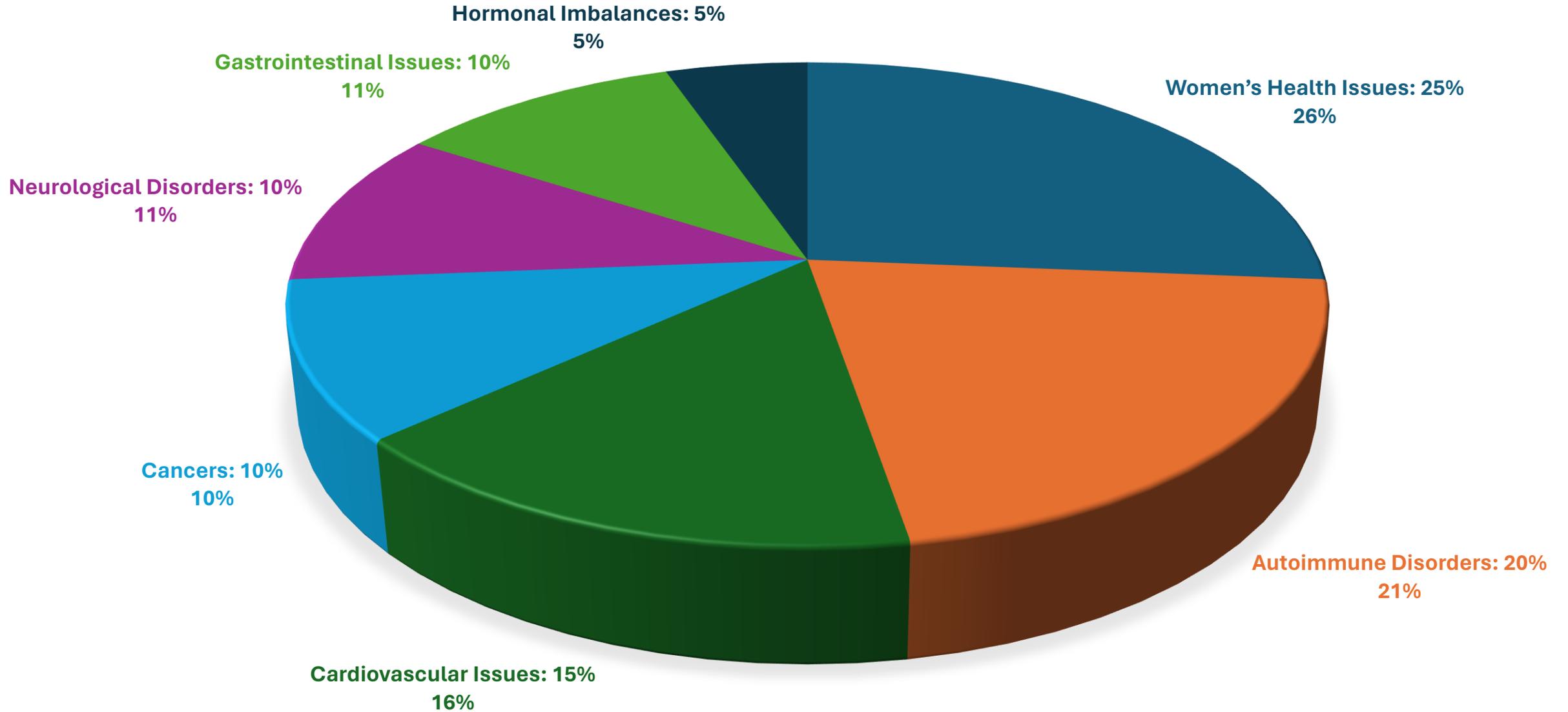
"I found a specialist who took my concerns seriously."



Overshadowing Experiences in SA



Common Overshadowing Themes



Examples

- **Cancers:** *"I was dismissed by 3 GPs for a few years putting my symptoms as a part of my mental illness. After a few years I was finally diagnosed with two lung diseases and lymphoma CLL."*
- **Neurological Disorders:** *"I have a diagnosis of OCD, anxiety, and depression. I had to heavily argue and advocate to have my case seen as more than a symptom of my mental illness. Turns out, I have Idiopathic Hypersomnia."*
- **Gastrointestinal Issues:** *"I had stomach and eating issues for over 3 years. I was only tested for diabetes, which were risk factors for meds with no further investigation. Turns out I had Coeliac disease."*

An illustration featuring two stylized human figures shaking hands. The figure on the left is orange and holds a sign with a blue arrow pointing right. The figure on the right is dark blue. The background is split into dark blue and orange sections. In the bottom left, there are smaller silhouettes of people.

Activism Vs Advocacy

- **Advocacy**
- Lobbying, Building Public Awareness, Collaboration, Direct Persuasion, Representation, Policy Development, Guerrilla Advocacy, Consultation
- **Activism**
- Protests, Strikes, Social Movements, Boycotts, Sit-ins, Petitions, Occupations, Civil Disobedience

Main Features of Advocacy

- Vision of change
- Awareness
- Policy references
- Action plan
- Active participation
- Representation
- Following political process
- Defending rights



An Advocacy Table

Symptoms	Potential Mental Health Causes	Potential Physical Health Causes	Things to Check, Test, or Ask About
Chronic fatigue	Depression, anxiety	Anemia, thyroid disorders, lupus	Complete blood count (CBC), thyroid function tests, ANA test
Severe menstrual pain	Stress, anxiety	Endometriosis, PCOS	Pelvic ultrasound, laparoscopy, hormone panel
Shortness of breath	Anxiety, panic disorder	Pulmonary embolism, heart disease	Chest X-ray, D-dimer test, ECG, CT scan
Joint pain	Depression	Rheumatoid arthritis, lupus	Rheumatoid factor (RF), ANA test, ESR, CRP

An Advocacy Table

Symptoms	Potential Mental Health Causes	Potential Physical Health Causes	Things to Check, Test, or Ask About
Unexplained weight loss	Depression, eating disorders	Cancer, hyperthyroidism	Thyroid function tests, complete metabolic panel (CMP), imaging studies (CT, MRI)
Chronic stomach pain	Anxiety, somatic symptom disorder	Coeliac disease, Crohn's disease	Endoscopy, colonoscopy, tissue biopsy, specific antibody tests
Palpitations	Anxiety, panic attacks	POTS, hyperthyroidism	Tilt table test, thyroid function tests, ECG
Neurological symptoms	Somatic symptom disorder, anxiety	Multiple sclerosis, epilepsy	MRI, EEG, lumbar puncture
Persistent pain	Psychosomatic pain	Chronic pain syndromes, fibromyalgia	Pain assessment, musculoskeletal exam, rheumatologic evaluation



Acknowledge
“Qualified By
experience”
Expertise

“You have to learn about thousands of diseases, but I only have to focus on fixing what’s wrong with ME! Now which one of us do you think is the expert?”

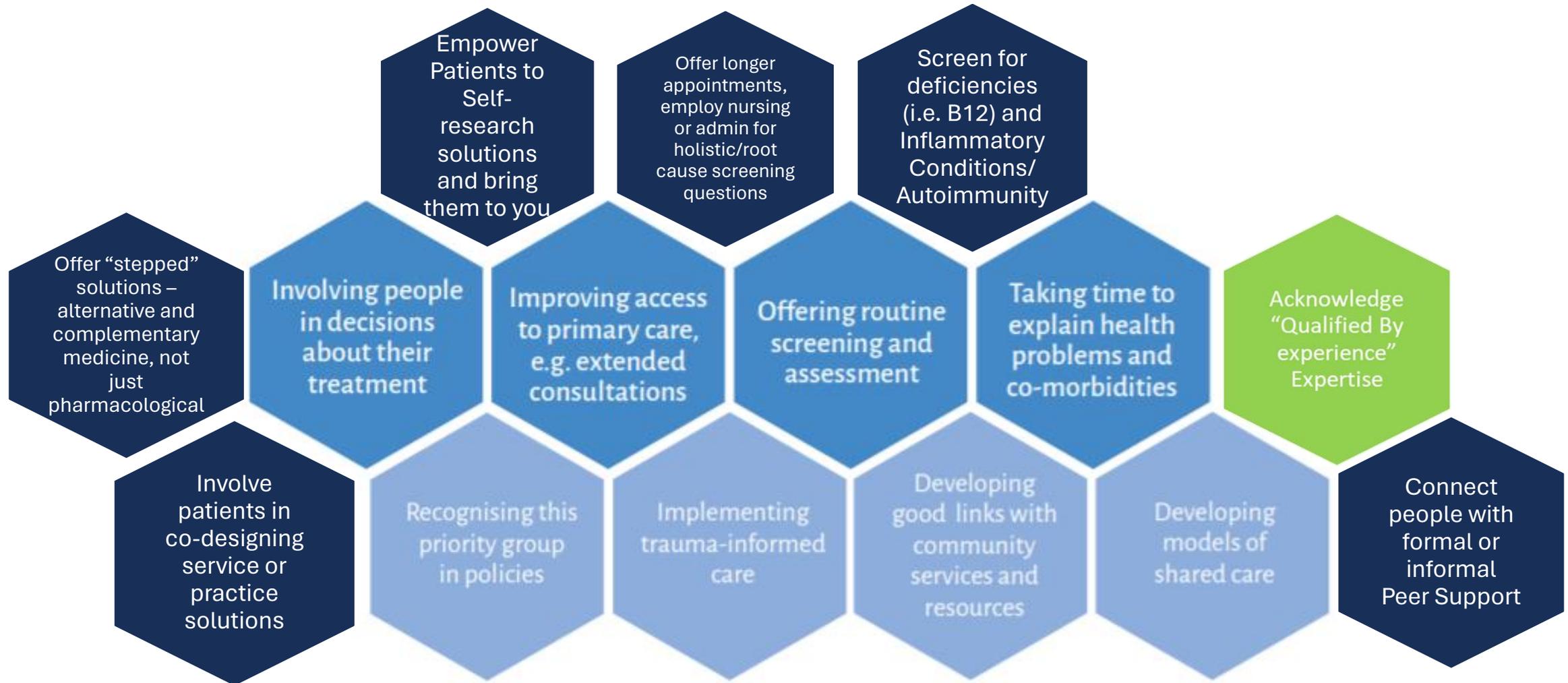


Storytelling for System Change

- ***"When it comes to inspiring people to embrace a vision or change a behaviour, storytelling isn't just better than the other tools, it's the only thing that works."*** - Simon Denning, World Bank
- ***"A new world requires new stories, but people will only listen to them when they themselves are included in the storyline."*** - Simon Hodges



Lived Experience focussed recommendations



Things that will make a positive difference to people with Lived Experience

ELECTRONIC RECORDS



GP AND
PRIMARY



COMMUNITY AND
SPECIALISTS



SECONDARY AND
TERTIARY SERVICES



OFFICIAL

NGAITYALYA (thank you)



**FOLLOW MY OFFICE ON LINKEDIN,
FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM.**



**CONTACT MY OFFICE AT
SAMHC@SA.GOV.AU OR
1300 293 220.**



**REACH ME PERSONALLY AT
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