



Grey clouds, Golden dawn

Equally Well Conference

20 Nov 2025

Adelaide, South Australia

Russell Roberts

Equally Well Australia | Charles Sturt University

equallywell.org.au





The Paradox - Dying for a life worth living...

*“Many people are spending years
living with*

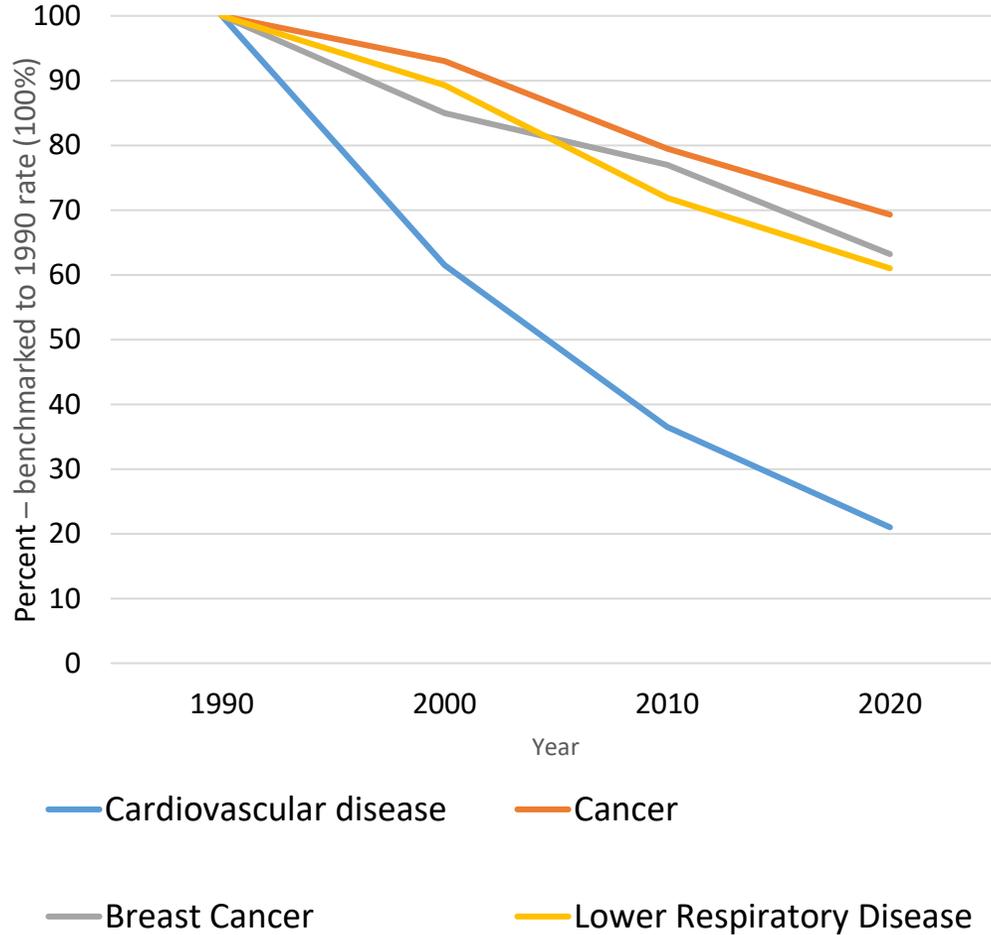
undetected but treatable

*physical health problems and people
are losing their lives because things
have been picked up too late”*

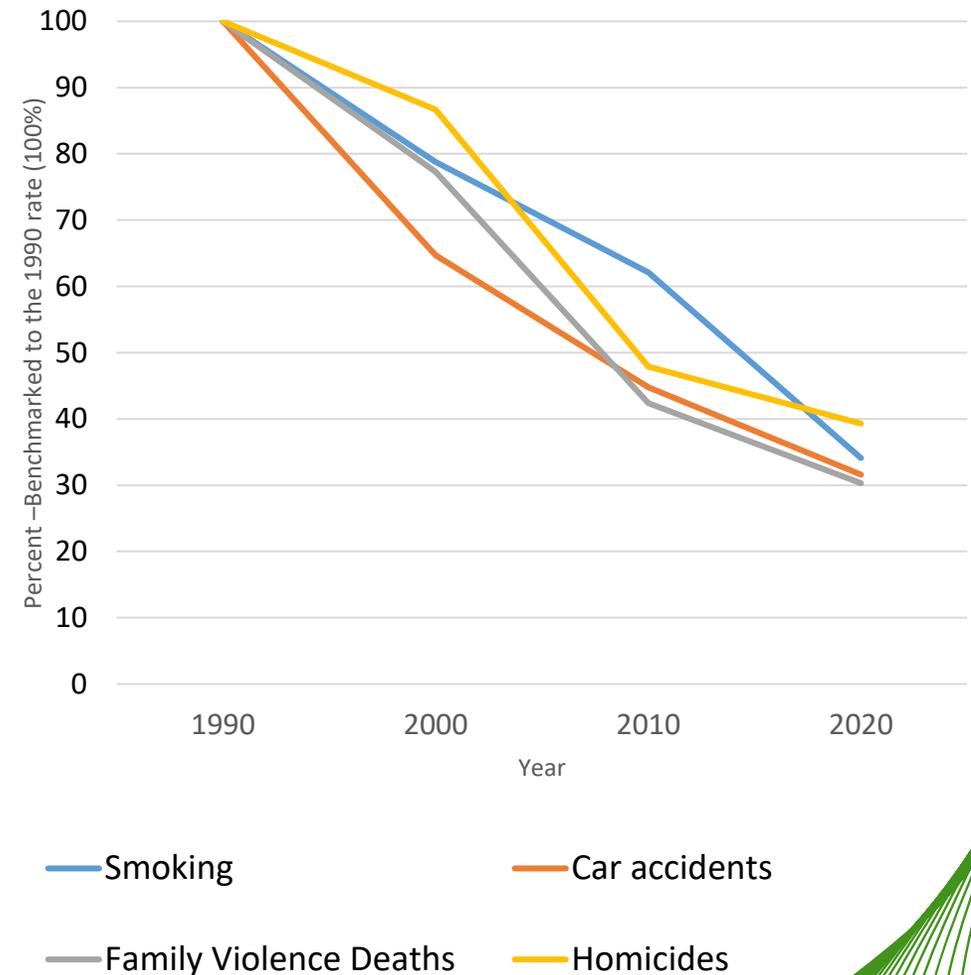


We are making remarkable progress in health & wellbeing

Chronic Disease Deaths



Other causes of death



National Study

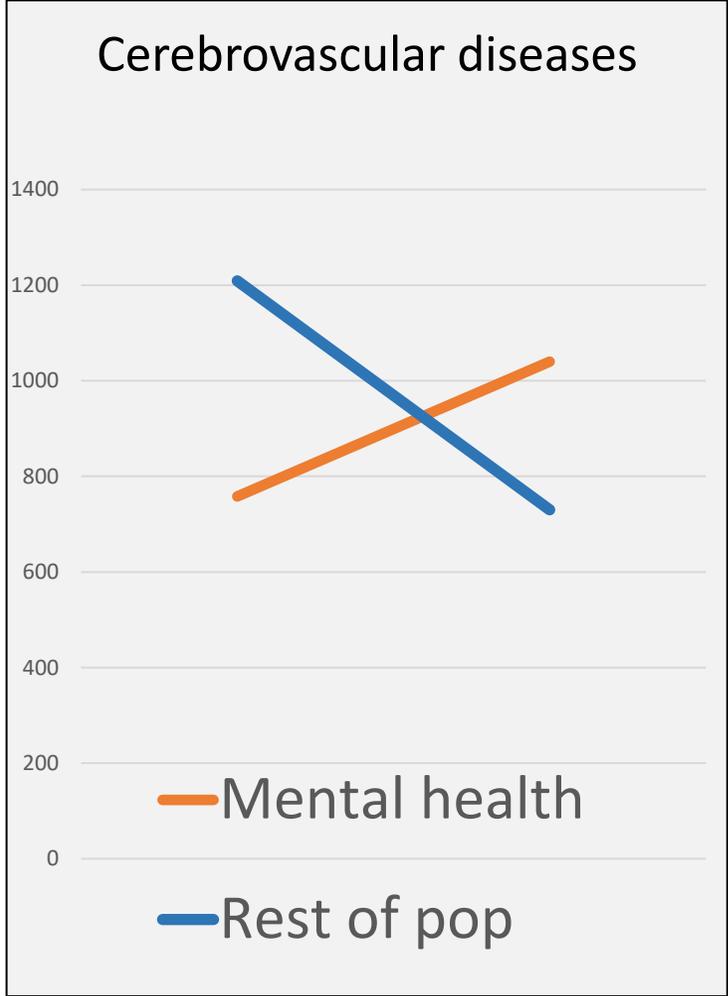
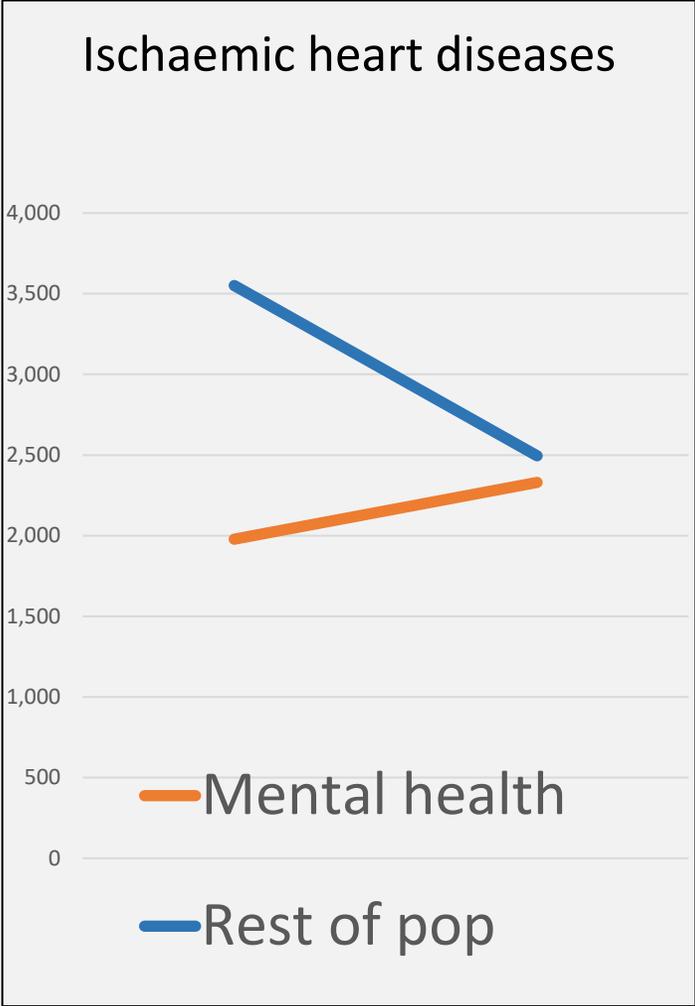
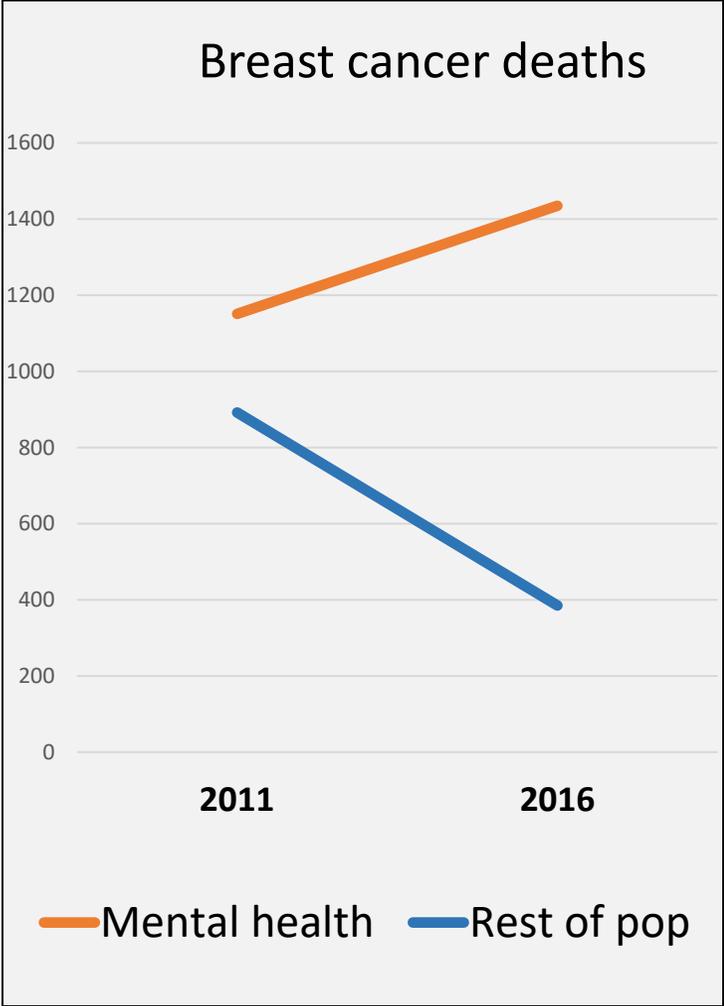
Every Australian

- Census data
- State/county/province death registers
- Medical Benefits Schedule
- Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
- Aust Tax Office, Aust Immunisation Register
- 21% accessed mental health-related items

NB data limitations – see report

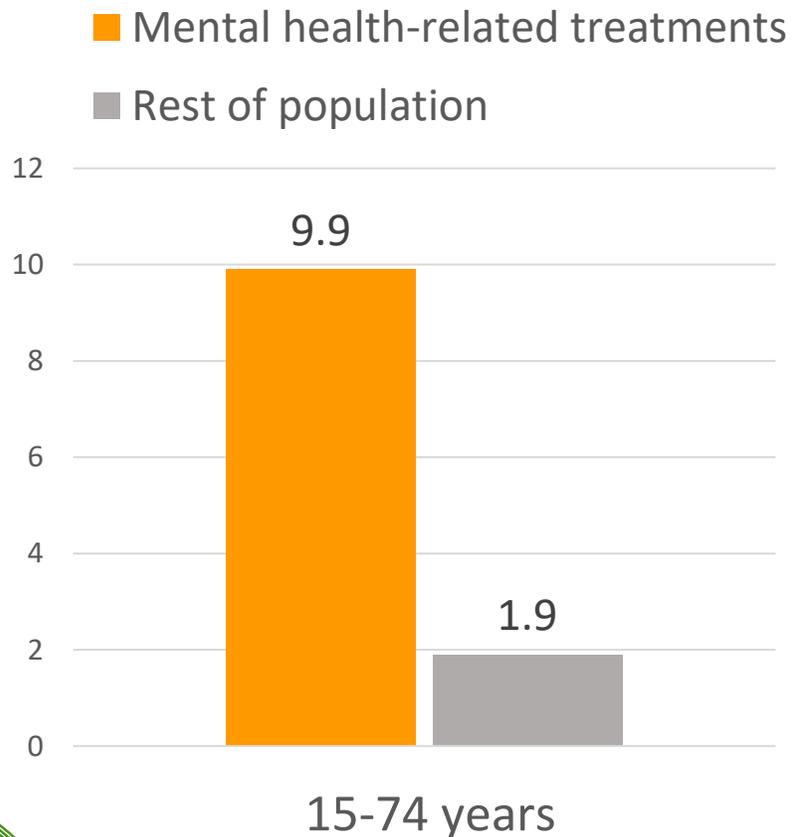


But not for people with mental health conditions



Unequally Unwell

Premature death rate of people living with mental health conditions is **five times higher** than the rest of the population



Every month in Australia...

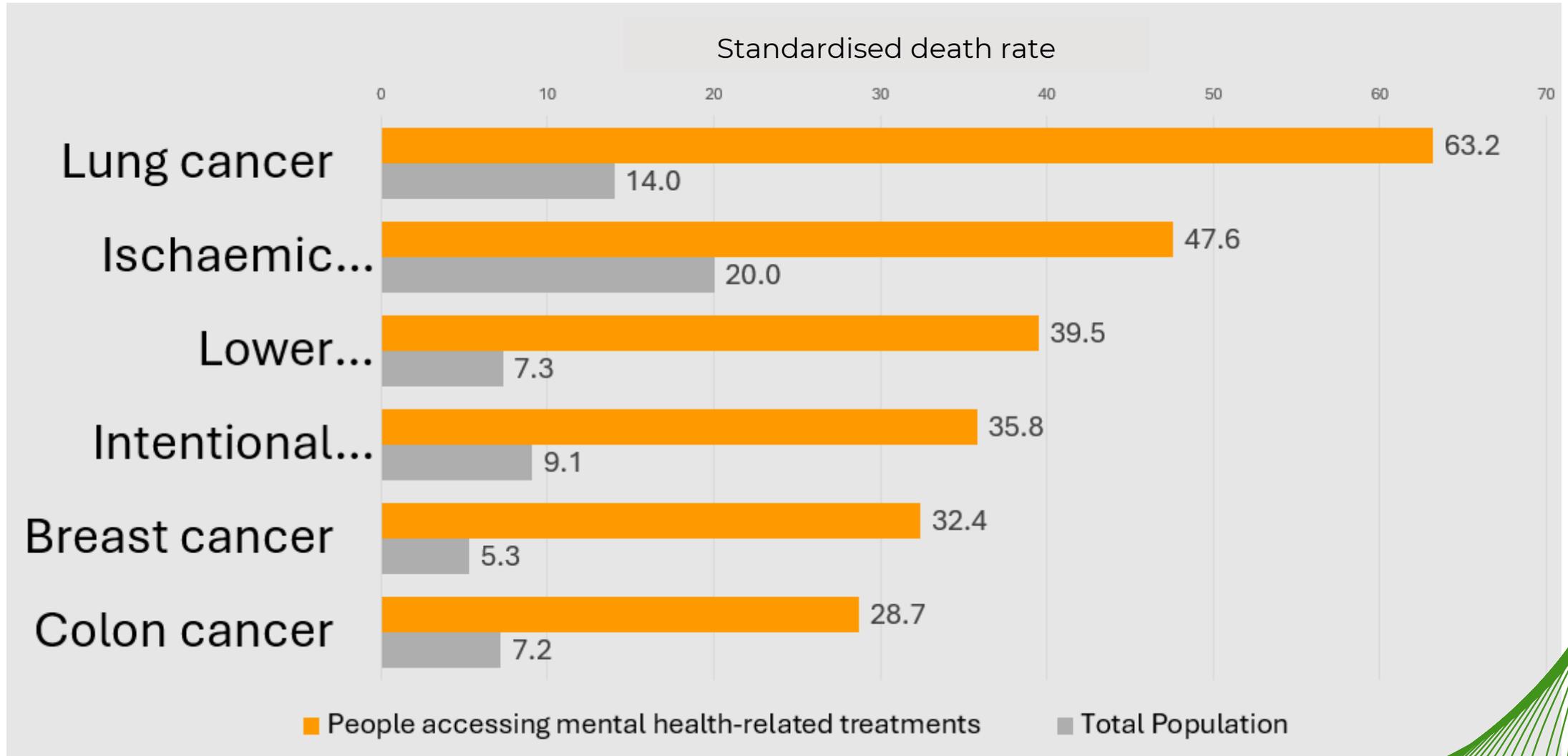
People with mental health conditions
700 deaths/mill

The rest of the population
200 deaths/mill

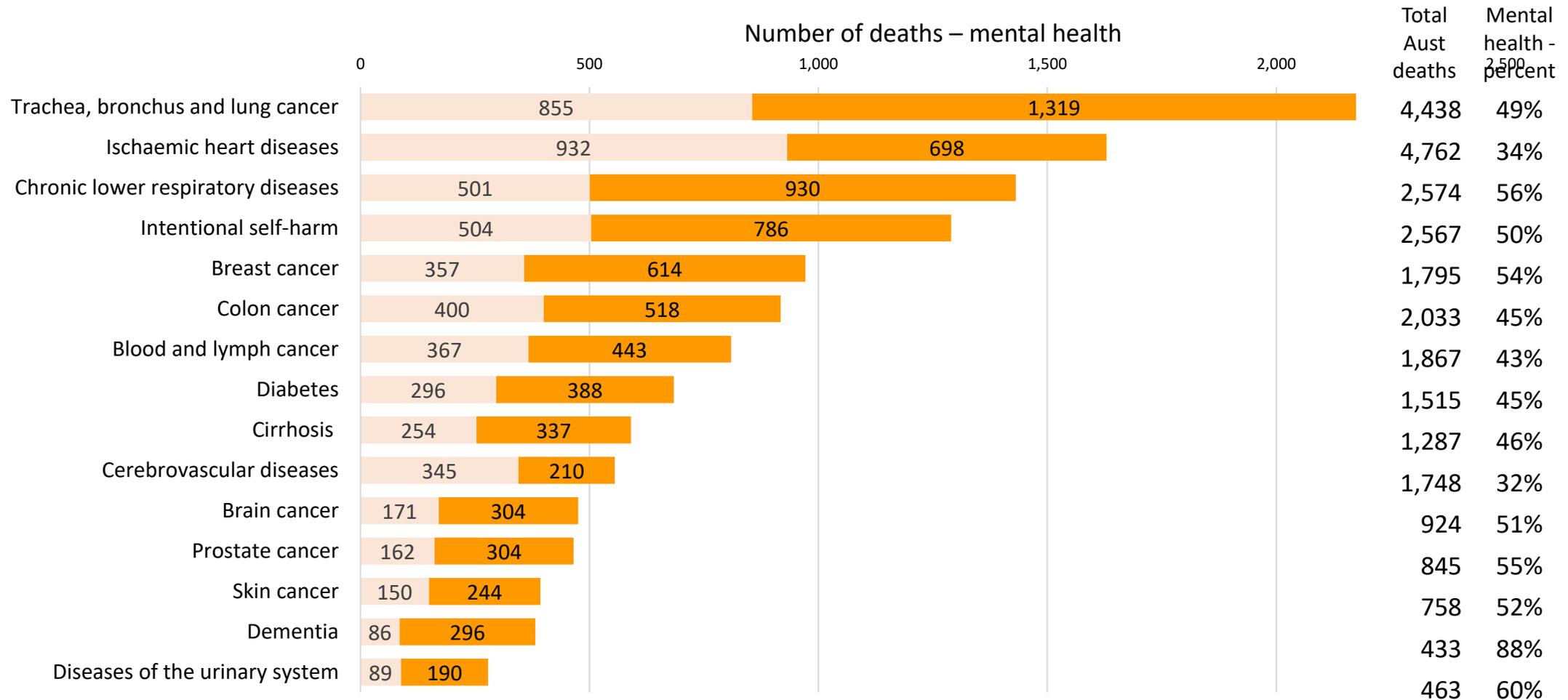
= **500 unnecessary deaths/mill**
of people with mental health conditions

= **1,750 unnecessary deaths**
for total mental health pop
(15-75 years)

The health inequity exists across all causes of premature death



Most deaths of people living with mental health conditions are potentially preventable*



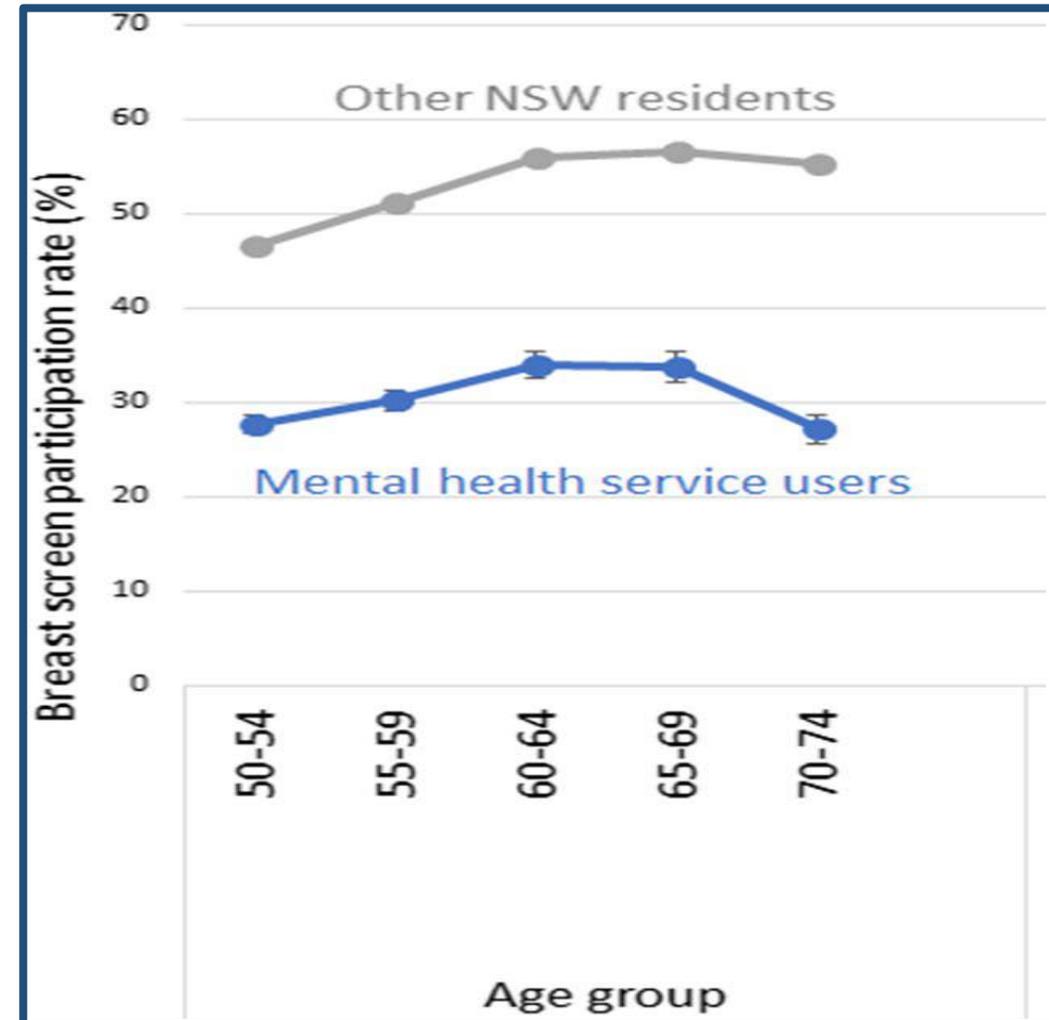
Cause of death in Australia People 15 - 74 years

	Proportion of deaths (% within group)	
	People living with mental health conditions	Rest of population
Cancer	45.4	24.5
CVD	11.9	16.3
Respiratory Disease	7.3	3.5
Diabetes	4.4	2.4
Suicide	4.5	4.3
Vaccine preventable	1.9	1.2



Breast cancer screening rates

- NSW 7.5 mill population
- People who accessed public mental health services compared to other residents



An Example - Breast cancer...In one year...

- **1,500 women** with mental health conditions aged 55 years + died of breast cancer
- **500 women** with mental health conditions of all ages died of suicide
- Breast cancer has a survival rate of **92+%** if detected early

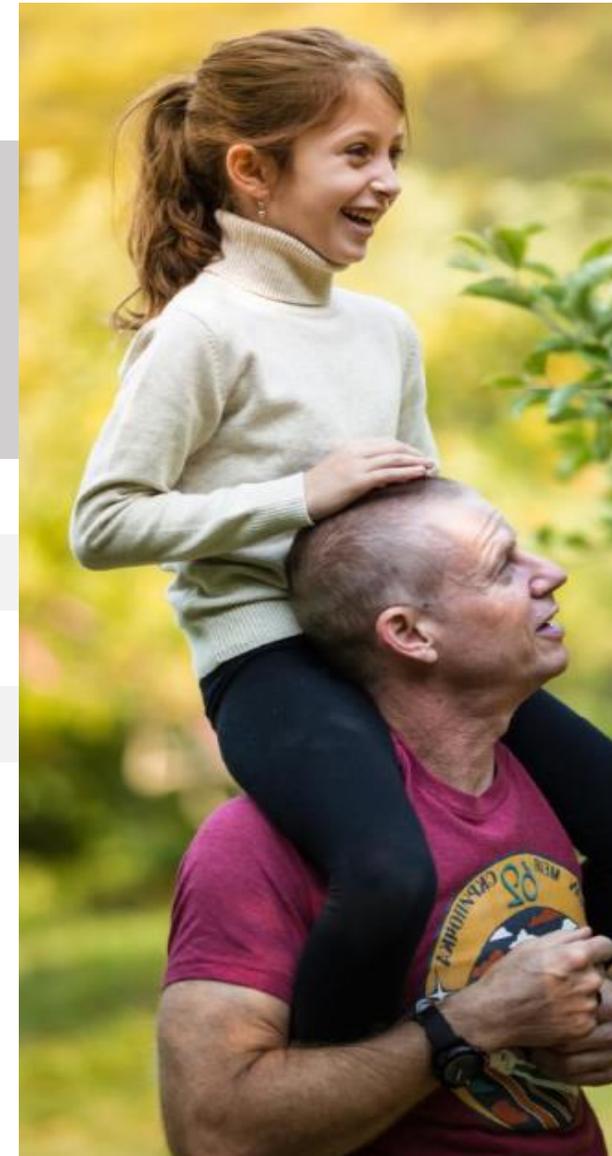


“Increasing cancer screening uptake by 33% for people with mental health conditions would have the same impact as reducing suicides to ZERO”



Every month....

Cancer	Mental Illness Deaths/month ¹	Treatment survival rate ¹³	Lives saved per month by screening a percentage of those not currently screened			
			100%	67%	33%	10%
Colon	160	70%	83	56	28	8.3
Breast	131	92%	83	56	28	8.3
Prostate	129	96%	64	43	21	6.4
Skin	72	93%	52	35	17	5.2
Lung	318	68%	195	131	64	19.5
Total	810		479	321	158	48



Vaccine preventable conditions...in one year



- **2,300 people** with mental health conditions died of influenza and pneumonia
- **1,600 people per year** with mental health conditions died of suicide

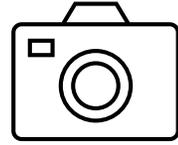
Why worry about the **physical health** of people living with mental health conditions?



- Holistic care is **our job!**
- Optimal health is a **fundamental human right***
- **Improves mental health**
- **Reduces suicide risk (60% association)**
- **Leads to:**
 - Fewer hospitalisations,
 - **Less demand** on health services
 - Improves productivity (\$10.5 bill)
 - Reduced community transmission
 - Increase capacity to live contributing life



The stolen years



Celebrate
Grandparents
Day





GAP

Flu deaths

Lung cancer deaths

Breast cancer
Prostate Cancer

Bridge



- Fund mh flu vax
- Train mh Staff
- (90 nurses already doing)



- Awareness
- Fund smoking cessation for mh



- Awareness
- Health Literacy
- Primary care engagement
- Access and navigators

Remedy

Flu vax

NRT
Uptake of LDCT
smoking cessation supports

Free Screen NBSP
Free Screen Breast cancer

**“Do: what you can,
where you can,
when you can.”**



Equally Well Au



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@EquallyWellAu



@equally_well_au

www.equallywell.org.au

**Stay connected and join the
Equally Well movement.**





History of women's suffrage in Australia & Britian

- 1879 First secondary school for girls
- 1881 **Adelaide University**—Full and equal access for woman
- 1883 Ladies Division for the **Society for Promotion of Social Purity**
- 1886 **United Trades and Labor Council** tabled first petition
- 1888 July **Woman's Suffrage League** formed
- Nov Ratified by **Christian Women's Temperance Union**
Endorsed by Working Women's Trade Union
- 1890 "Letters to Woman" published in The Register
- 1891 **Caldwell** took delegation to speak to Premier
Petition of 219 signatures tabled in Parliament
- 1892 Delegations to Premier Holder
- 1893 Delegations to Premier Downer
- 1894 April Petition of 11,600 signatures presented to House of Assembly
Dec **House passed the Bill – Now an Act of Parliament.**
- 1895 Feb Queen Victoria Assented to the Act.
- 1902 Federal Government act – Women's dual rights
- 1908 **Muriel Matters** first woman's speech to British Parliament.
- 1928 Equal Franchise Act passed in Britian.

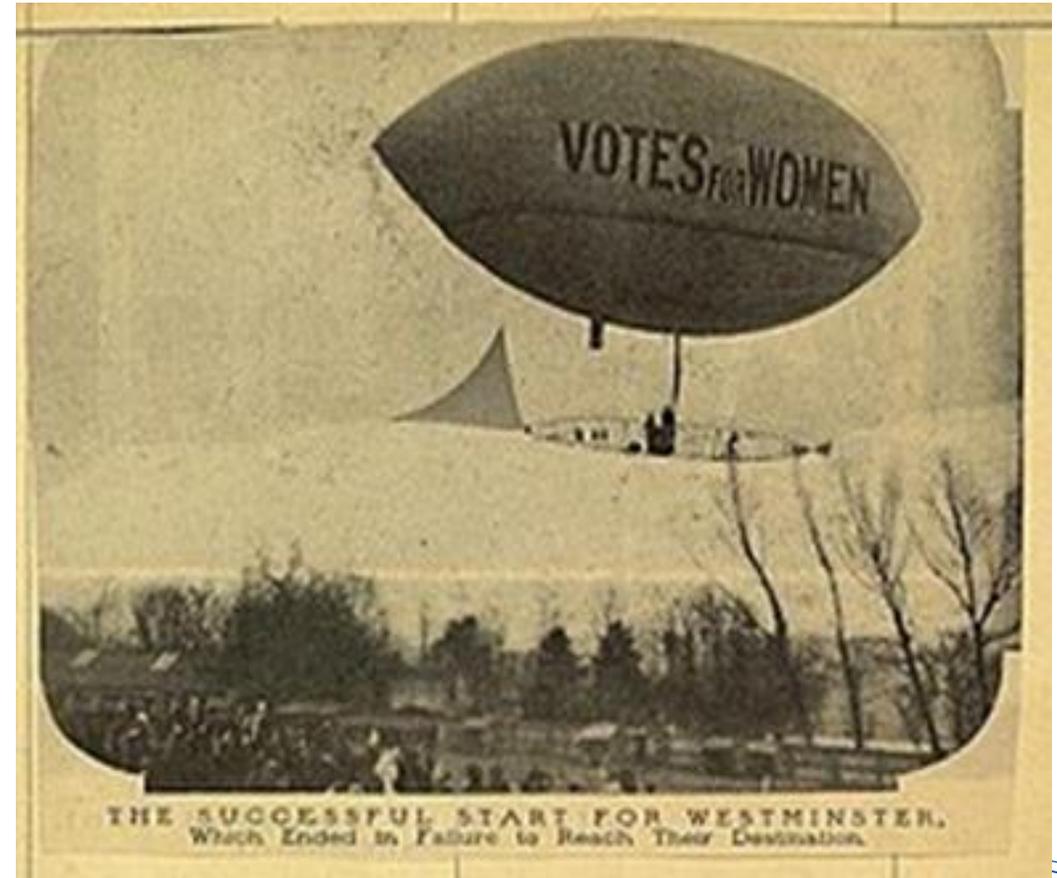


"Women shall possess and may exercise the rights hereby granted, subject to the same qualifications and in the same manner as men."



***“When you don’t speak, you speak.
When you don’t act, you act.”***

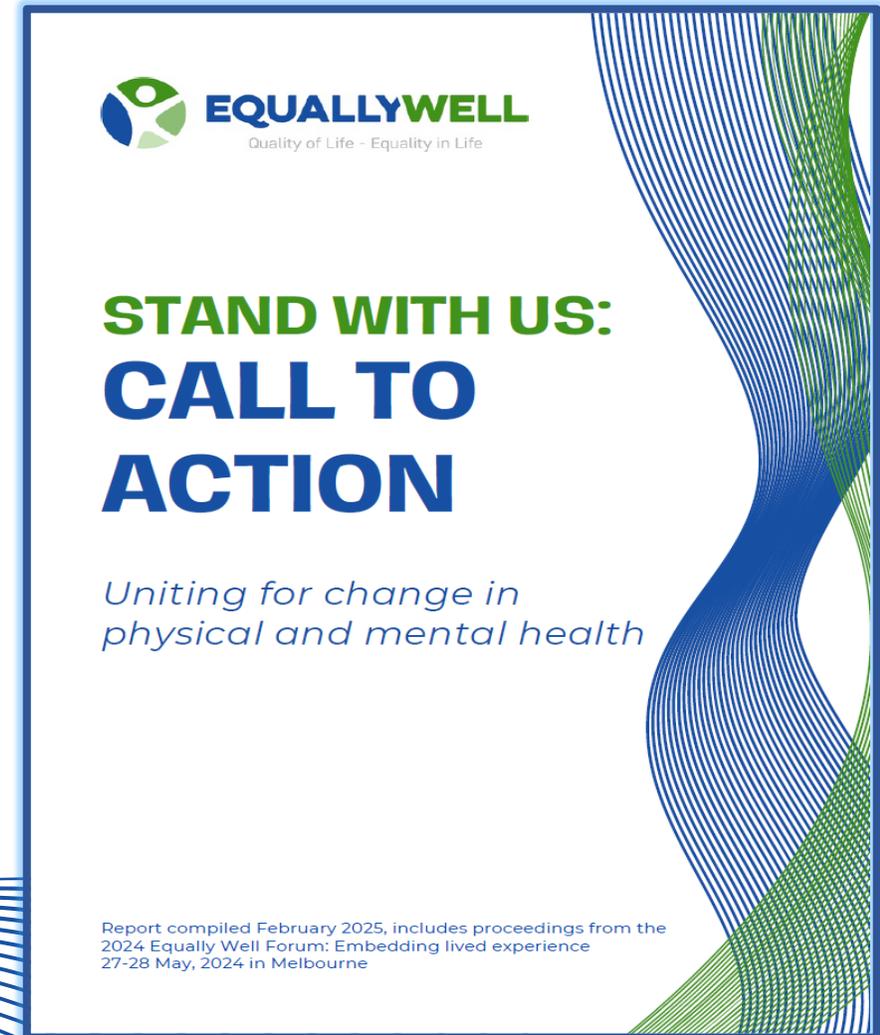
Dietrich Bonhoffer



Swiel Satters



Sign the petition to Ministers of Health & Mental Health



Equip

MHPOD

Mental Health Professional Online Training

<https://elearning.mhpod.gov.au/player/#course=5d389f5e&renew=true>



Around 80 percent of people living with mental health conditions also have a physical health condition that increases their risk of early death. They are five times more likely to die prematurely from a physical illness that could have been prevented.

Empower

Consumer resource

<https://www.equallywell.org.au/consumer-resource/>



Taking Charge of your Care

Using this Resource

About You

Identifying Your Needs

In the Appointment

After the Appointment

Helpful Links

Using this Resource

This resource is to help you communicate your needs and preferences to doctors and clinicians who are caring for you. It has been written specifically for people living with both physical and mental health concerns. The resource is designed to be used in appointments with General Practitioners (GPs) but may also be used in any other care setting.

You can use this resource to help identify your health needs, and work out what matters most to you before you go to appointments. You might do this just as a record for yourself, or you might complete this resource to give it to your doctor or specialist, clinician, or support person. You can print this out before you go to your appointment.

The resource contains about 40 questions. You don't need to answer every question, only the ones you want to share. It will take at least 20 minutes to complete, but may take longer depending on the information you would like to include.

When you have filled out all you want to share, it can be saved as a PDF file or printed. The questions you don't answer will not be included in the PDF. You could also download a blank version of the

Educate

Factsheet #4 Bowel cancer



This factsheet is part of a series on specific health risks for people living with mental health conditions. It draws on Equally Well's national monitoring report, [Unequally Unwell](#). There is an 11-year life expectancy gap for people living with mental illness – two-thirds of these deaths are potentially preventable.¹

About bowel cancer

Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal, colon, or rectal cancer, develops from the inner lining of the bowel.² Incidence of colon cancer is increasing in Australia, especially in people under 50 years old.³

Bowel cancer screening saves lives

[Screening](#) involves a simple at-home test for people who do not have obvious symptoms of disease, and may detect early signs.

The health inequity

In people living with mental health conditions, bowel cancers cause:

- over 900 premature³ deaths per year¹, and
- more than 500 of these deaths are 'potentially preventable'.¹

At least **10 deaths per week** from bowel cancer could be prevented!

Don't take the risk. Take the test.

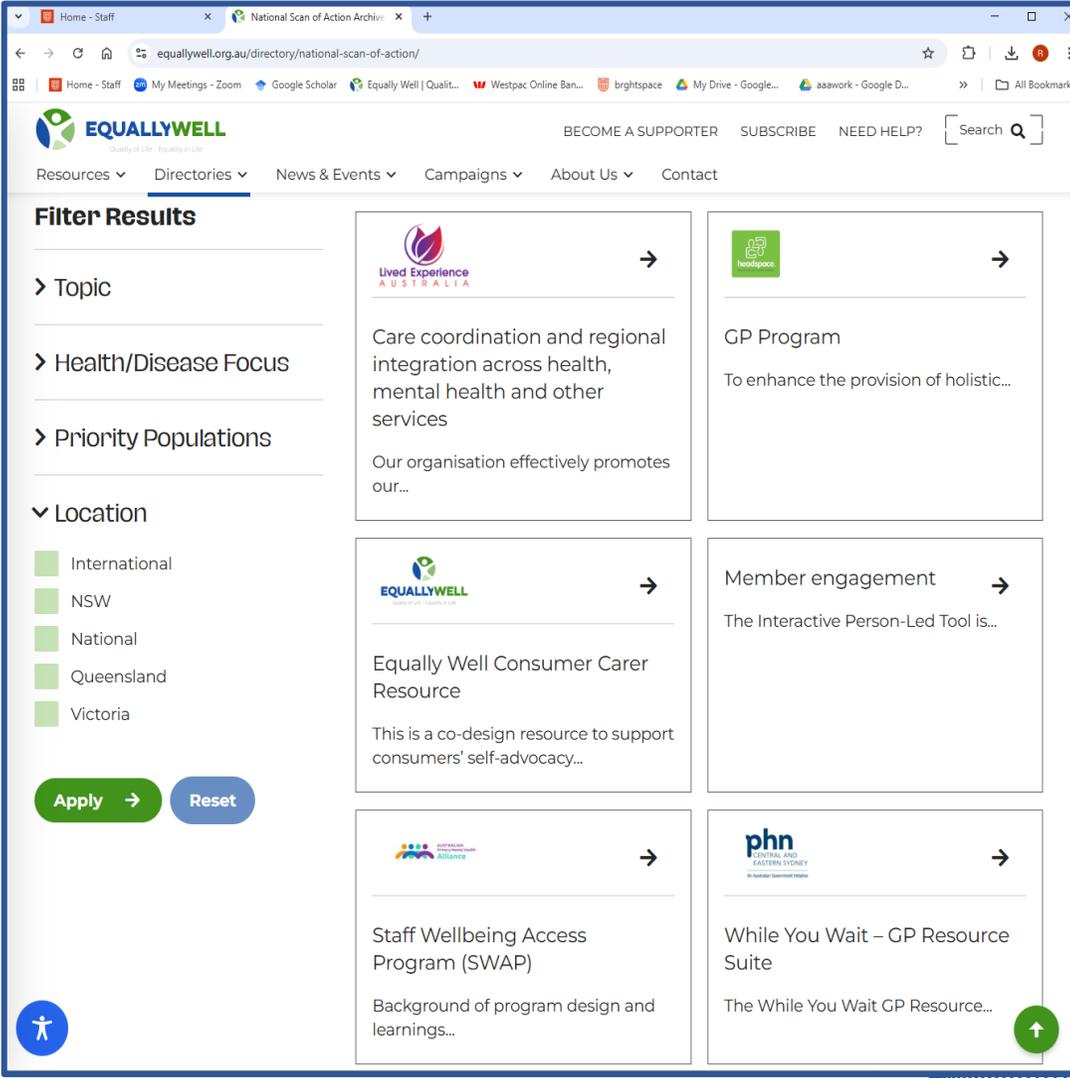
People aged 50-74 are automatically sent a bowel screening test. If aged over 45 years, you can also [request a kit online](#).

However, people with a mental illness are significantly *less likely* to:

- complete a bowel screening test^{4,5}
- complete the test correctly^{4,5}
- receive a follow-up colonoscopy after a positive test result.^{4,5}

*For ages 15-75 years; these figures are doubled when considering all ages.

Enjoin



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Equally Well website. The page is titled "Filter Results" and shows a search for "National Scan of Action Archive". The search results are filtered by "Topic" (Care coordination and regional integration across health, mental health and other services), "Health/Disease Focus" (GP Program), "Priority Populations" (Member engagement), and "Location" (International, NSW, National, Queensland, Victoria). The search results are displayed in a grid format, with each result card containing a logo, a title, and a brief description. The Equally Well logo is visible in the top left corner of the page.

Neami Health Prompt

supported by Equally Well

neaminational.org.au/healthprompt



Enact

Refreshed

Neami

Health Prompt

To be launched

Tomorrow!

Enlist!

Subscribe to newsletter/mail list

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Share innovation, evidence and success stories

enquiries@equallywell.org.au

www.equallywell.org.au



“When you don’t speak, you speak. When you don’t act, you act.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Engage



**Be a part of history!
Sign the petition to
Government Ministers**



**STAND WITH US:
CALL TO
ACTION**

*Uniting for change in
physical and mental health*

Report compiled February 2025, includes proceedings from the
2024 Equally Well Forum: Embedding lived experience
27-28 May, 2024 in Melbourne