

# Professor Ian HICKIE

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## Improving Mental Health Outcomes in Australia.

### Abstract

Improving both population-based and individual mental health outcomes are among the biggest challenges facing the Australian community and health planners. Developments under the National Mental Health Strategy (1993-2003) have placed increasing emphasis on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. The most recently developed *Better Outcomes in Mental Health* (2001-2004) under the Federal Government has prioritised improved primary care services and emphasised better access to non-pharmacological forms of care. *beyondblue*: The National Depression Initiative has articulated the need for greater public awareness of common mental health problems like depression and anxiety, increased community participation in finding solutions and ongoing commitments to increased illness prevention and improved quality and mix of services. To date, there is some preliminary evidence of improving outcomes in some key areas, notably in primary care. There is now the capacity to develop and support more integrated approaches to quality care and an increasing commitment to measurement of impacts on population-level outcomes (e.g.. reductions in national suicide rates, reductions in risk factors, increased access to appropriate services, increased mental health literacy, reduced social barriers to workplace participation) as well as on individual outcomes (reduced prevalence, reduced morbidity and improved quality and mix of services provided).

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