

Experiencing a psychosocial disability

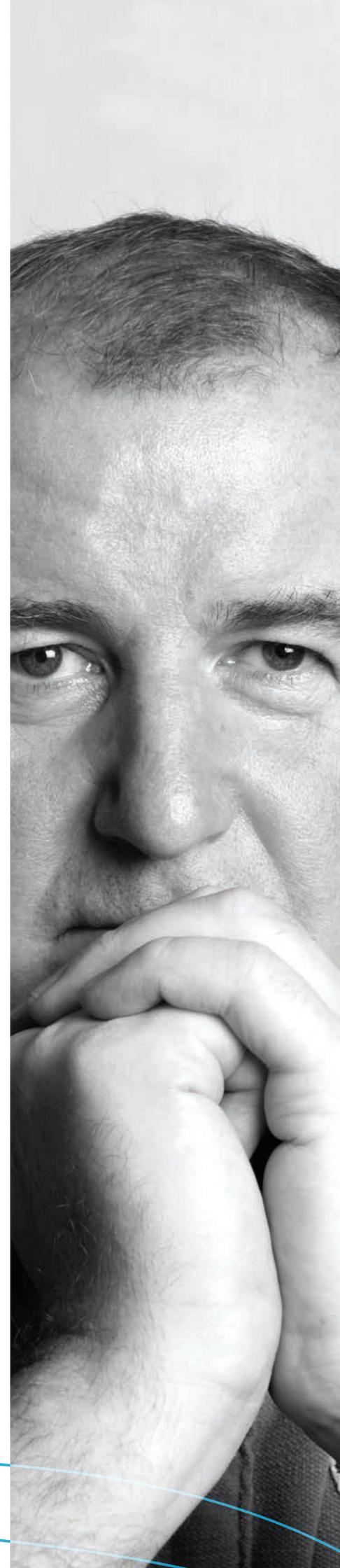
Psychosocial disability describes the experience of people with emotional and physical barriers attributed to their mental health issues. These barriers often impact an individual's ability to fully participate in their community. Due to the nature of mental illness and health, individuals' experiences may be episodic and fluctuate in type, severity, duration and impact. These changes in presentation also can be impacted by the individual's life experiences and circumstances.

Psychosocial disability may impact an individual's capacity to attend to daily tasks, think clearly, experience full physical and mental health and the ability to manage social and cultural activities. People who experience a psychosocial disability may find it difficult to set goals and make plans, and engage in education, training and employment. These factors may also impact an individual's ability to navigate the health services available and they may struggle to access and participate in mainstream supports and services, such as a safe housing and tenancies.

How may experiencing psychosocial disability impact a person's housing tenancy?

There is a dynamic relationship between homelessness and the experience of psychosocial disability. Evidence suggests that individuals who experience mental ill-health also face greater risk of homelessness than the general population. Poverty and homelessness may also severely impact housing options, education, employment, social support, family cohesion, and access to health services. Several structural and individual factors increase the likelihood of mental health challenges and its impact on housing outcomes. For example, homelessness may be a trigger for mental health challenges. Persons with lived experience of mental ill health are also vulnerable to further common risk factors for homelessness, such as domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drug addiction, and unemployment. This then increases a person's vulnerability and risk of remaining homeless or facing chronic homelessness.

Evidence indicates that taking a housing first approach in securing sustainable and stable accommodation, allows for people to focus on their treatment and recovery. Greater choice, control and agency, alongside supports and services, facilitates positive general health and wellbeing, and improves a person's quality of life. Housing quality leads to positive effects on mental illness and housing stability.



Best practice approaches for psychosocial disability supports and services

The supports and services an individual receives should advance a person's social, economic and cultural inclusion and provide opportunities to achieve goals and increase independence. Supports and services that take this approach are strength-based, reflexive, holistic and person-centred. They will be informed by the persons lived experiences and personal contexts. Essential to this approach is the inclusion of the individual's formal and informal support networks to address individual needs and goal achievement. Where mainstream and disability support services work alongside the individual and their natural supports in an integrated approach, the individual experiences greater outcomes.

Psychosocial disability and the NDIS

Participants who qualify for NDIS supports must be able to demonstrate that they:

- have a severe and enduring mental health condition
- have significant impairments in social, personal and occupational functioning that require intensive, ongoing support that the NDIS can provide
- require extensive health and community supports to maintain their lives outside of institutional care.

The NDIS focus on the building of capacity for individuals with a psychosocial disability to participate in their community. In this context, recovery is the building of skills and resources to manage the effects of psychosocial disability. These supports may increase or decrease throughout the recovery journey according to the episodic nature of a persons psychosocial disability. The NDIS provides access to a new range of supports to facilitate engagement and skill building, whilst also providing the foundations to build self-management skills and capacity.

For further information and support

Tenancy

Consumer Affairs

1300 55 81 81

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Victorian Office of the Public Advocate

1300 309 337

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au

Mental health

Wellways

Helpline: 1300 111 500

wellways.org

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

