

National communications charter

action guide for governments

The *National communications charter (the Charter)* is an evidence-informed document to help guide the way mental health and suicide prevention sectors, governments, businesses, communities and individuals communicate about mental health and wellbeing, mental health concerns and suicide.

Below are some practical examples of how the seven principles can be implemented by governments:

The Charter principles

Example activities

1
We will make communicating about mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention a priority.

- Prioritise mental health and suicide prevention training for staff across all government levels and agencies.
- Develop policies and procedures that consider communicating about mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, and suicide prevention as a priority.
- Embed the Charter online learning modules into staff training and practices.
- Organise a working group or champion group to prioritise and implement the Charter principles.

2
We will respect the diversity of, and our actions will be guided by, people with lived and living experiences of mental health concerns and suicide.

- Ensure a diversity of lived experiences including representation of people with lived experience from diverse communities are incorporated into the work.
- Include people with lived experience to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives.
- Provide opportunities for people with lived experience to sit on boards or committees, enabling them to provide advice and be part of decision-making processes on policies and strategies.
- Invite people with lived experience to support public communication about co-designed government initiatives and policies.



3

We will listen to and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions, to strengthen social and emotional wellbeing.

- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are included in all decisions which are impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples following the concept of 'nothing about us, without us'.
- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in decision-making processes.
- Use culturally-safe terminology. For example, promote strength-based (rather than deficit-focused) language, and ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their preferred language, such as whether they prefer the term, 'social and emotional wellbeing'.
- Actively engage in NAIDOC week and other significant cultural celebrations, as well as anti-racism events. Avoid contributing to cultural load by ensuring that it is not always Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are leading these events.
- Recognise the influence of culture on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, and encourage practices that promote connections to Country, culture, spirituality and community.
- Seek opportunities to hear from a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to acknowledge the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4

We will base our communication on clear, consistent and evidence-informed messages.

- Use evidence-based resources as a guide to improve all communications about mental health concerns and suicide, including in policies and strategies, and all public communication.
- Provide avenues for staff to have input into safe communication practices and information sharing.
- Update policies and procedures to ensure they align with key messages from the Charter.
- Have a media action plan to support safe communications about mental health and suicide including a postvention response plan.



5

We will use appropriate, respectful and person-centred communication.

- Be familiar with preferred and non-preferred language. Please refer to these [language guides](#).
- Lead by example and hold others accountable to ensure appropriate, respectful and person-centred language is used in all communications such as meetings and parliamentary sessions.
- Provide resources to all staff that support strength-based messaging and break down common stereotypes about mental health concerns and suicide.
- Have onboarding systems in place that includes information about appropriate and person-centred language.

6

We will work together to combine our efforts and support change.

- Promote the Charter and its principles within the organisation by displaying a signed copy of the Charter or having a banner in staff email signatures.
- Collaborate with others to action and support workplace mental health and wellbeing initiatives, and track progress.
- Encourage partnering organisations to become signatories of the Charter.
- Nominate key staff to champion and promote the Charter principles.

7

We will provide and promote access to the appropriate supports and services for people and communities.

- Provide internal and external mental health support pathways (e.g. EAP, HR, peer support program, GP mental health treatment plan), promote the confidentiality of these programs and ensure the pathway to accessing support is clear.
- Ensure all your communications about mental health and suicide contain help-seeking information.
- Develop appropriate policies to respond to traumatic incidents that may arise within the respective government's jurisdiction.
- Ensure when communicating with electorates about matters that may impact on people's mental health and wellbeing, support service information is provided.