



**MIND MEDICINE**  
A U S T R A L I A

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## **Mind Medicine Australia calls for URGENT Mental Health Innovation Taskforce to tackle the mental health pandemic sparked by Covid-19**

Mental health charity Mind Medicine Australia (MMA) calls for and strongly supports all recommendations to form a Mental Health Innovation Taskforce to be immediately established in order to guide the government in planning the next steps to manage the increasing mental health pandemic triggered by Covid-19 and the recent bushfires tragedy.

Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies are highly innovative and should be made available in Australia to treat critical mental illnesses caused or exacerbated by the current Coronavirus crisis. Therefore, the Taskforce must include a senior psychiatrist familiar with both these treatments and the global developments taking place right now. MMA stands ready to help the federal government identify the most appropriate candidate to assist with the Taskforce.

The treatments involved in Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies use psilocybin for depression and MDMA for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as part of psychotherapy in medically-controlled environments. Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies have already been granted “breakthrough therapy designation” in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration to fast track the approval process. They are also available to doctors and their patients on a limited basis through expanded access schemes in the United States, Switzerland, and Israel.

The focus of the Taskforce will need to be on innovation in treatments and pragmatic implementation to reach the millions who are suffering from a mental illness. Already, one in five Australian adults have a chronic mental health condition, and one in eight Australians (and one in four older adults) take antidepressants, and suicide rates are already high.

Experts warn that a long-term mental health pandemic is looming in Australia that will potentially surpass the physical health impacts of the coronavirus. Frontline charities are suggesting that the effects of the current pandemic on mental illness could be “seven times” worse than the spike in mental illness caused by the recent bushfires.

MMA's call to action follows the Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, representatives from the Mental Health Commission, and other relevant experts participating in emergency consultations last week.

**The Hon. Andrew Robb AO, former Trade Investment Minister and a Director of MMA, argues that the development of a government strategy to tackle the burgeoning mental health crisis must include the introduction of innovative treatment options like Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies. “Remission rates for people experiencing common mental illnesses using the standard treatments of antidepressants and psychotherapy are only about 35 per cent effective. But Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies have been shown to have remission rates of 60-80% in recent overseas trials after just two to three treatments.” -continues-**



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According to the chairman of MMA, Peter Hunt AM, **“A proactive approach to broadening the treatment options available for people who have a mental illness is desperately needed. With the likelihood of the coronavirus pandemic continuing for months to come, many more Australians will experience anxiety, trauma and depression and suicide rates could significantly increase in the absence of affirmative action.”**

Tania de Jong AM, Executive Director of MMA, says, **“The remission rates that could be achieved with Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapies will release vast financial resources to help governments around Australia develop and fund more proactive agendas to assist the nation’s recovery. The financial burden from mental illness, which represents an enormous amount of human suffering, can be expected to increase significantly in the future if governments don’t take decisive action to introduce new treatment options. Unlike conventional treatments which often require patients to endure years of daily medications and weekly support from a mental health professional, Medicine-Assisted Psychotherapy can be effective after just two to three dosed sessions, and the medicines are safe and non-addictive when properly used in a medically-controlled environment.”**

For further information on Medicine-Assisted-Psychotherapies, please visit the MMA website:  
[www.mindmedicineaustralia.org](http://www.mindmedicineaustralia.org). -ends-

**The Hon. Andrew Robb AO, Peter Hunt AM, and Tania de Jong AM are available for interview.**

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