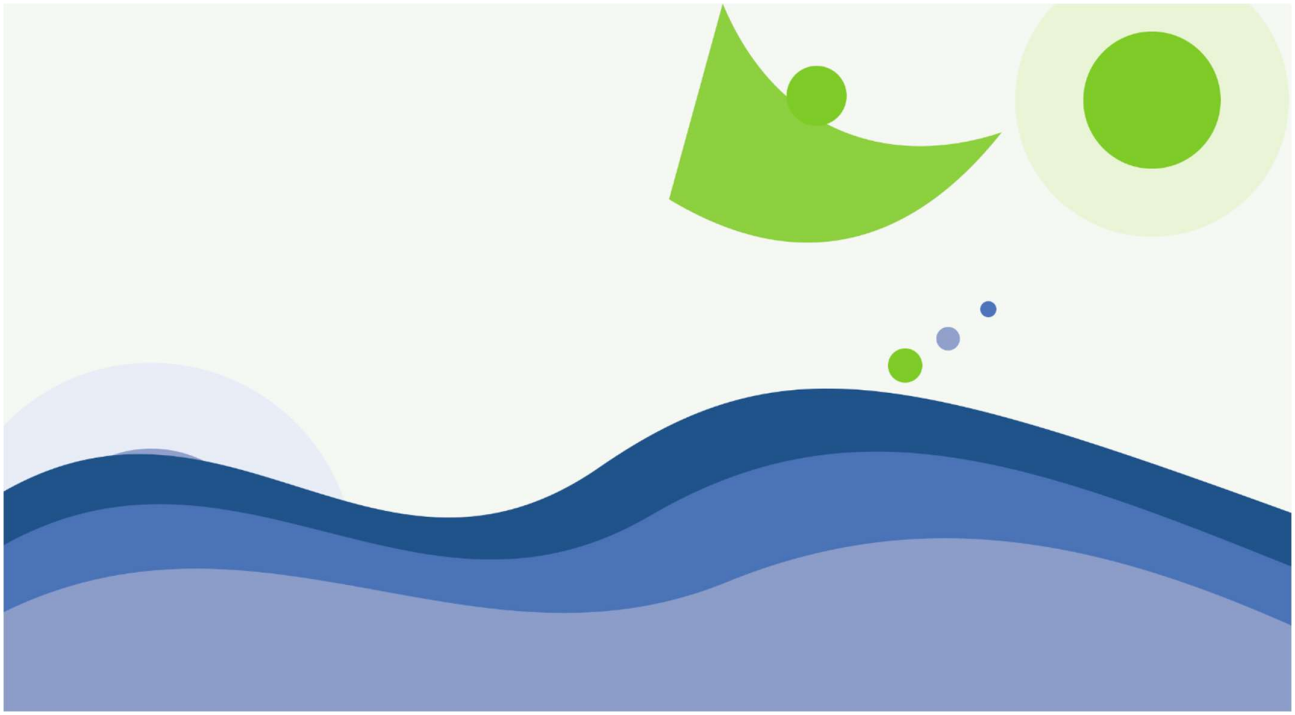
mentis assist

For better mental health

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026

Recover. Connect. Thrive.



CELEBRATING over 35 years

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

REGISTERED CHARITY

acnc.gov.au/charityregister

About this annual report

This report provides an overview of Mentis Assist's services, outcomes, partnerships and organisational performance for the period 01 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. It reflects the contributions of our board, executive, staff, clients, participant advisory group, others with lived or living experience, funding bodies, partners and community stakeholders.

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This report covers the period 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

Our Vision and Purpose

Our vision is…

A future where every individual feels empowered to recover, connect, and thrive – where hope is ignited, voices are heard, and communities grow stronger together.

Our purpose is…

To provide mental health support that inspires hope, promotes recovery, and strengthens community connection.

Our values are…



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather, the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



We are committed to working collaboratively with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to foster mutual understanding, respect, and reconciliation. We aim to:

Engage in meaningful dialogue with community leaders and members to understand their needs and aspirations.
Support cultural preservation by participating in and promoting local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural events and initiatives.
Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through employment and education.
Ensure inclusivity in our services and programs, making them accessible and relevant to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Our care, support and treatment enable Aboriginal consumers, families, supporters, and communities to achieve resilience, self- determination and empowerment. This requires a holistic view of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing, where connectedness and relationships are central. This includes connection to Country and culture, spirituality and ancestors, family, and community. We recognise the influence of past experiences, broader social factors, and physical health on wellbeing.

Together, we strive to build a future that respects and honours the rich heritage and ongoing contributions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our region.

Recognition of Lived and Living Experience

People with lived and living experience play a vital role in designing and delivering the programs we offer. We recognise that nobody knows the mental health and wellbeing system better than the people who have experienced it first-hand. People with lived and living experience draw on their personal experience, as well as lived and living experience principles and community perspectives, to inform their work.



At Mentis Assist we are growing our lived and living experience workforces (LLEWs) as well as investing in our Participant Advisory Group (PAG) to ensure we hear directly from the consumers who are using the service to ensure they have a say in what we do and how we do it.

We also recognise that sharing personal experiences can often come at a personal cost and offer a range of support to assist meeting the needs for all.

CEO and Chair Report



Paul Burness
Board Chairman



Terry Palioportas
Chief Executive Officer

Leading Through Change, Strengthening for the Future

The 2025–26 year has been one of achievement, growth and adaptation for Mentis Assist. Throughout the year, the Board and Executive remained focused on strengthening the organisation and advancing our commitment to delivering high-quality mental health and wellbeing services, maintaining strong governance, investing in our workforce and capabilities, embracing innovation, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation. Guided by our strategic pillars of People, Brand, Funding, Technology and Systems, and Operational Performance, we continued to build the foundations necessary to support our communities now and into the future.

The Board continued to exercise its governance responsibilities through active oversight of organisational risk, quality, compliance, culture, and strategic planning. Our Board sub-committees played an important role in supporting these responsibilities and ensuring ongoing accountability across key areas of organisational performance.

We were pleased to welcome Roy Gibson to the Board in August 2025. Roy's expertise and community perspective have strengthened the depth and diversity of skills represented on the Board.

Expanding Our Community Impact

Throughout the year, Mentis Assist increased its visibility, advocacy, and community presence through a broad range of initiatives, events, partnerships, community forums, stakeholder engagement activities, and sector collaborations. While it is not possible to highlight every contribution in this report, the following example demonstrates the positive impact of these efforts and our ongoing commitment to mental health awareness and community engagement.

In recognition of World Mental Health Day, two of our Directors, Jayne Parish and Michael Sillekens, were invited to participate in Channel 31's special mental health forum, Let Us Talk Mental Health. The televised panel discussion brought together experts, advocates, and community leaders to promote mental health awareness and encourage open dialogue across the community.

Participation in this high-profile event strengthened Mentis Assist's reputation as a trusted community voice and reinforced our commitment to mental health advocacy and public education.

Strategic Growth and Service Expansion

One of the year's most significant milestones was the successful award of the Care Finder Program – Outer South LGA Cluster contract.

Funded through aged care reform initiatives arising from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, the program provides intensive support to older Australians who face significant barriers in accessing aged care and other support services. The service focuses on some of the community's most vulnerable individuals, including those experiencing social isolation, mental health challenges, cognitive impairment, homelessness, limited support networks and other complex circumstances.

Commencing in 2026 and extending through to June 2029, the contract represents a substantial investment in both our organisation and the communities we serve, with a total value exceeding $2.5 million. Unlike many funding agreements that are renewed annually, the longer-term nature of this contract provides increased certainty, supports workforce stability and enables longer-term service planning and community engagement.

The program expands Mentis Assist's presence across Greater Dandenong, Casey, and Cardinia, strengthening our ability to support vulnerable populations and respond to growing community needs across Melbourne's outer south-east. It also represents an important diversification of our service portfolio and reinforces Mentis Assist's reputation as a trusted provider capable of delivering high-quality, person-centred services across a range of community sectors.

This achievement demonstrates the confidence funders place in Mentis Assist's governance, service delivery capability, and community impact, while creating new opportunities for future growth, partnerships and innovation.

Participant Advisory Group (PAG): Ensuring Consumer Voices Shape Our Future

At Mentis Assist, lived and living experience is central to shaping services that are responsive, effective and person-centred. Our Participant Advisory Group (PAG) plays a critical role in ensuring consumer voices are set in throughout the organisation's governance, quality improvement, and service development activities.

Throughout 2025–26, PAG continued to strengthen its contribution to Mentis Assist, providing advice and feedback on a wide range of organisational initiatives and priorities. The group met regularly throughout the year and actively contributed to discussions relating to service quality, client experience, policy review, workforce engagement, technology and innovation, and organisational governance.

The group played an important role in reviewing client-facing information and policies, including telehealth service information, privacy and consent processes, and the introduction of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in case note documentation. PAG members provided valuable feedback on client communication, informed consent processes, and privacy considerations, helping ensure that innovation remains balanced with transparency, safety and consumer choice.

During the year, PAG members also contributed to quality improvement initiatives, including client survey processes, client file audit discussions, quality and safety reporting, and service improvement activities. Members provided recommendations designed to strengthen consumer participation, enhance accessibility, and improve the overall client experience across our services.

Consumer representatives were also involved in organisational activities beyond formal meetings. PAG members participated in Mental Health First Aid training, contributed to program evaluation activities, provided feedback on staff psychosocial health and wellbeing initiatives, and supported recruitment and workforce discussions, including consumer involvement in interview processes for new positions. The group also contributed to the development and review of its own Terms of Reference, strengthening the framework through which lived experience informs organisational decision-making.

A significant achievement during the year was the continued evolution of the group's role from consultation toward greater partnership and co-design. Efforts were made to increase opportunities for meaningful participation through document reviews, consumer workshops, quality committee representation, hybrid meeting options and broader engagement with community and sector networks. These initiatives are helping create stronger pathways for consumers to influence decisions that affect services and outcomes.

PAG's contributions continue to strengthen our governance and improve our services. Their involvement reflects our commitment to collaboration and recovery-oriented practice and helps bring our vision to life: a future where every individual feels empowered to recover, connect and thrive, where hope is ignited, voices are heard, and communities grow stronger together.

Investing in Our Workforce and Culture

Our workforce remains the foundation of our success, and we continued to invest in understanding and improving the employee experience throughout the year.

The 2025–26 Staff Culture, Engagement and Psychosocial Safety Survey achieved strong participation, with approximately 70 per cent of staff contributing feedback. Results highlighted a committed and engaged workforce, strong team-based connections and a genuine willingness among employees to contribute to organisational improvement.

The survey also identified opportunities for further growth, leading to the establishment of five organisational priorities focused on: Communication and transparency, Organisational connection, Psychological safety, Career development and Consistency across the organisation.

A comprehensive action plan has been implemented to address these priorities and support ongoing workforce development, wellbeing, and engagement.

The organisation also completed its Psychosocial Hazards Consultation process, reinforcing our commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and mentally healthy workplace.

Organisational Development and Sustainability

As part of our ongoing commitment to sustainability and effective resource management, Mentis Assist undertook a review of its organisational structure during the year.

The review resulted in a strategic realignment of leadership and operational responsibilities designed to strengthen service delivery, enhance leadership capacity, and improve financial sustainability. Responsibilities were redistributed across the senior leadership team to ensure resources remain focused on frontline services and organisational priorities.

These changes reflect the organisation's commitment to remaining agile and responsive within an increasingly complex and competitive funding environment while positioning Mentis Assist for future growth and innovation.

Quality, Safety and Accreditation Excellence

A significant achievement during the year was the successful accreditation of Mentis Assist against the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health (NSQDMH) Standards.



Following an external audit conducted by Quality Innovation Performance (QIP), Mentis Assist achieved compliance across all standards. This accomplishment is especially noteworthy given the relative newness of these standards at the time of accreditation and the limited number of organisations nationally to have achieved accreditation to date.

This result reflects the organisation's ongoing commitment to quality improvement, clinical safety, service excellence, and the delivery of safe, effective, and contemporary digital mental health services.

Strengthening Cyber Security and Risk Management

Cyber security remains an increasingly important area of organisational risk management.

During the year, Mentis Assist commissioned an independent assessment of its cyber security posture against the Australian Signals Directorate's Essential Eight framework.

The assessment identified several areas of strong performance, including multi-factor authentication and data backup practices, while also highlighting opportunities to strengthen cyber resilience through further investment in application controls, vulnerability management, incident response planning and monitoring systems. The findings have informed a structured program of cybersecurity improvements across the organisation, with many recommendations now integrated into organisational systems and practices.

As part of this commitment, work commenced on the development of a formal Cyber Security Incident Response Plan, ensuring the organisation has clear procedures for identifying, responding to and recovering from potential cyber security incidents. The Board also sought external expertise to assist with prioritising future investments and ensuring cyber security initiatives deliver meaningful risk reduction while remaining financially sustainable.

These initiatives complement the organisation's broader investment in digital governance, information management, and quality systems. Together, they strengthen Mentis Assist's ability to operate safely within an increasingly digital environment while maintaining the trust and confidence of clients, staff, partners, and funding bodies.

The Board has adopted a practical, risk-based approach to cyber security improvement, focusing on achievable enhancements that are proportionate to the size and complexity of the organisation. This work will continue in 2026–27 as part of our broader commitment to organisational resilience and good governance.

Financial Sustainability and Stewardship

Mentis Assist continued to maintain a strong financial position throughout 2025–26, delivering an operating surplus of $413,000, compared with $390,000 in the previous financial year. In a year where community organisations continued to face increasing salary, operational and inflationary pressures, coupled with funding contracts that often failed to keep pace with rising costs, achieving a positive financial result was an important outcome. The surplus reflects the organisation's commitment to responsible financial stewardship and ensuring that Mentis Assist remains financially sustainable and resilient in an uncertain funding environment while continuing to meet the growing needs of our communities.

The year was characterised by both opportunities and challenges. While the organisation successfully secured the new SEMPHN-funded Care Finder contract, which will support future growth and service expansion, we also faced funding reductions across a number of existing programs as part of broader Commonwealth funding changes affecting the community mental health sector. Through proactive planning and organisational realignment, Mentis Assist responded to these pressures while maintaining service quality, client safety and continuity of care. Nevertheless, reduced funding levels required a scaling of workforce capacity and service delivery activity to align with available resources, ensuring the organisation remained financially responsible and sustainable.

Consistent with our commitment to delivering community benefit, more than 80 per cent of total organisational expenditure was invested directly into client services and program delivery, ensuring that available resources continued to provide meaningful support and positive outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

The organisation's balance sheet remains strong, with total equity of approximately $2.3 million at year-end. This provides a solid foundation from which to manage future risks, invest in strategic opportunities and ensure the long-term sustainability of our services.

While financial performance is only one measure of success, maintaining a sustainable financial position enables Mentis Assist to continue pursuing its purpose of providing mental health support that inspires hope, promotes recovery, and strengthens community connection. As we look ahead, we remain committed to balancing prudent financial management with ongoing investment in quality services, workforce capability, innovation, and community impact.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the achievements of 2025–26, we acknowledge the dedication of our staff, volunteers, leadership team, Board members, partners and stakeholders whose commitment continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people experiencing mental health challenges.

While the operating environment remains complex, Mentis Assist enters the coming year with confidence. Our strong governance, committed workforce, proven service delivery capability, successful accreditation outcomes, expanding community presence and strategic growth opportunities position us well for the future.

The challenges facing the mental health and community services sector are significant, yet the need for high-quality and accessible support has never been greater. Mentis Assist remains committed to embracing innovation, strengthening partnerships, responding to community need and ensuring our services continue to make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Together, we look forward to the future with optimism, determination, and a clear sense of purpose, continuing to create opportunities for recovery, connection, and wellbeing for those who need it most.

Closing Reflections

As we reflect on the 2025–26 year, we do so with a profound sense of gratitude, pride, and optimism. This year has demonstrated the strength of our people, the value of our partnerships, and the positive impact that can be achieved when communities come together with a shared commitment to supporting mental health, wellbeing and recovery.

On behalf of the Board and Executive, we extend our sincere thanks to our dedicated staff, whose compassion, professionalism, creativity and commitment continue to transform lives every day. Whether supporting individuals through recovery, fostering community connections, advocating for better outcomes, or responding to emerging challenges, our staff consistently demonstrate the values that define Mentis Assist and remain the foundation of everything we achieve.

We thank our Executive Leadership Team and our Board Directors for their stewardship, expertise and leadership throughout the year. Their commitment to strong governance, strategic direction and organisational sustainability ensures Mentis Assist remains well-positioned to meet both current and future community needs.

We also gratefully acknowledge the members of our Participant Advisory Group. Through sharing their lived experience, perspectives and insights, they help ensure that the voices of the people we support remain at the centre of our decision-making, service design, and continuous improvement efforts.

To our clients and their families, we extend our appreciation. Thank you for placing your confidence in us and allowing us to be part of your journeys. Your resilience and lived experiences encourage us and continue to shape the way we deliver services and support recovery.

We acknowledge and thank our many partners, collaborators and supporters across the health, mental health, community, and aged care sectors. The outcomes we achieve would not be possible without the strength of these relationships and a shared commitment to building healthier, more inclusive and connected communities.

We also express our sincere gratitude to our funding partners, including the Victorian Government, the Australian Government, South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN), and the many organisations that invest in our services and support our vision for stronger communities. Their ongoing support enables us to provide essential services, develop innovative responses and reach people who need support most.

As an organisation, we remain committed to our vision of a future where every individual feels empowered to recover, connect and thrive, where hope is ignited, voices are heard, and communities grow stronger together. Guided by our purpose of providing mental health support that inspires hope, promotes recovery and strengthens community connection, we continue to place people at the centre of everything we do.

While the environment in which we operate continues to evolve, we look forward to the future with confidence. The achievements of this year have reinforced the strength of our foundations and demonstrated the extraordinary impact that can be achieved through focus and hard work.

Together, we will continue to create opportunities for recovery, strengthen community connections and inspire hope. As we enter a new year, we remain committed to building a future where individuals, families and communities not only overcome challenges but are empowered to thrive.

Thank you for being part of the Mentis Assist journey. Through the collective efforts of our staff, participants, partners, supporters and community, we continue to grow and provide sustainable outcomes. We are proud of what has been achieved this year and excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Director of Clinical and Community Services Report

Michael Sillekens | Director of Clinical and Community Services

Having re-read my report from 2025, I realised much of what I wrote remains relevant today. The changing needs of our clients, the growing role of lived and living experience in the workforce, the tension between short-term programs and long-term mental health challenges, and the ongoing reform agenda continue to shape our work. While change can sometimes feel slow, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Many of our programs operate like well-oiled machines, delivering strong outcomes supported by a stable workforce, sound governance and consistent performance.

But that doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels. I'm a huge fan of a framework released a couple of years ago called ***Our Workforce Our Future,*** which is a capability framework for the mental health and wellbeing workforce. We've done a lot of work in this space over the last two years, incorporating the principles of care and the capabilities into our new, revamped model of care document. It's time now to take a step back and see if all the training, all the talking, all the effort is making a difference.

Principle number one states: *All practice is responsive to the needs of the individual.* There are six more principles in our model of care, underwritten by company values and a mission statement. To be honest most staff probably don't know what our 7 principles are, but the important thing is that the care we deliver is in line with our principles. It's easy to say to somebody 'No!' 'You don't fit' 'You're not eligible.' but when the care we deliver aligns with the principles we embrace, staff go the extra mile.

We've started a new committee called 'joining the dots' with the intention of reviewing the implementation of the model of care. For 12 months we've done things like asking if a client was from a diverse background or what their sexuality is. Now we want to see if knowing that about a person makes a difference to the care we provide for them. It's good if we can tick a box to say that our client is Aboriginal, but it's not good if the care we deliver to them is the same as we give to every other person. Joining the dots is looking at all the information available to us, such as what our Your Experience of Service (YES) surveys say, what does our data report tell us, what we can glean from our client stories, our compliments and our complaints. For years we've collected an outcome measure called the K10+, but we've never really used the results to inform our practice.

I've started watching how many clients complete their episode of care, as opposed to those that get closed for a variety of other reasons. During the coming year we will place greater emphasis on episode completion rates, with an aspirational target of 75% of consumers completing their care journey as planned. This would mean that three out of four clients that are referred to us come in, have an assessment, agree on a care plan, work on the goals, achieve those goals, and leave 'better' than when they arrived. This is the work that exemplary organisations do and what we strive to achieve.

Analysing all the input data that we have available will assist us to strategically target what our workforce needs to better equip them to do the job we expect of them. So rather than continuing to provide training against the 15 capabilities in our framework, we will selectively target one or two capabilities per year and do whole of organisation training to our weak spots. All of Mentis training will lead to better collaboration amongst teams, reducing silos amongst programs, and more comprehensive care for our clients. It's a lot of work but we are lucky because we don't have a lot of staff turnover and have a stable workforce which makes the journey a bit easier.

Key achievements this year:

Workforce Development

- We've assisted two nurses in the MHICC program to become nurse practitioners.
- Two of our new graduate psychologists are completing their clinical registrar program.
- Numerous psychology undergraduates, mental health social work students, and certificate IV TAFE students have completed successful placements in our programs.
- We have navigated dozens and dozens of client stories assisting clinicians to get the best outcomes.

Sector Leadership and Partnerships

- We participated in an in-depth review of the EIPSR program working with Quality from Bayside Health
- We have worked with Mental Health Victoria on numerous topics and agendas.
- We continue to participate in reference groups for the Department and the PHN



Service Innovation

- We've implemented the new Care Finder program under our social support banner in a very short turnaround period.
- We have further entrenched our partnership with the Kindred Clubhouse.

Quality and Governance

- We completed a review of the governance structure of the mental health and wellbeing local and set priorities for the next 12 months.
- We have participated in the community redesign project for the mental health and wellbeing commission.

Director of Operations & Business Development Report

Jayne Parish | Director of Operations and Business Development

The past year has seen noteworthy progress in service expansion, strategic partnerships, advocacy, workforce development, and organisational infrastructure. Together, these initiatives have strengthened Mentis Assist's capacity to respond to community need, contribute to sector reform and build a sustainable foundation for future growth.

Expanding access and strengthening partnerships



A major achievement for the year was our successful submission to deliver the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN) Care Finder Program across Casey, Cardinia, and Greater Dandenong. Funded through SEMPHN by the Australian Government, the program assists vulnerable older people who require intensive support to understand, access, and navigate the My Aged Care system.

The program focuses on people who may face significant barriers to accessing services, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQA+ people, First Nations people, veterans, care leavers, and Forgotten Australians. It also supports people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, those with a mistrust of government agencies and people whose experiences of institutional care have contributed to poor engagement with service systems.

This expansion extends Mentis Assist's reach into important growth areas while building on our experience supporting people with complex mental health, social and service-navigation needs.

Our partnership with Chisholm Institute also continued, providing valuable student placement opportunities within our psychosocial support programs. These placements contribute to the development of the future community mental health workforce while introducing students to person-centred, recovery-oriented and community-based practice.

Across the community, we engaged with many organisations to provide education about Mentis Assist's services, eligibility requirements, and referral pathways. These included Adult and Youth Prevention and Recovery Care services, Southeast Community Links, Cardinia Shire Speak Up event and Cardinia's Rural Mental Health event, Chisholm Institute, and the David Scott School to name a few. These activities help strengthen referral pathways, improve service awareness, and support earlier access to appropriate care. Mentis Assist also joined the Frankston City Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee. This positions the organisation to contribute its mental health expertise to local emergency planning and trauma-informed community responses.

Together with the Director of Clinical and Community Services, I represented Mentis Assist on Channel 31's *Let's Talk Mental Health* panel for World Mental Health Day. The discussion explored the mental, social, emotional and wellbeing needs of multicultural communities and reinforced the importance of culturally responsive and accessible mental health support.

Advocacy and sector leadership

Mentis Assist continued to contribute actively to sector advocacy and policy development. We responded to Mental Health Victoria's call for submissions to support its engagement with government, highlighting the growing structural pressures facing the community-managed mental health sector at a time of increasing demand, workforce shortages, and greater complexity of client need.

Our submission focused on five significant systemic concerns:

1. The loss of dedicated workforce training and development funding.
2. Inadequate investment in supported housing for people experiencing mental ill-health.
3. The need for a comprehensive mental health workforce strategy.
4. The decommissioning of the Accessing Mental Health Services website.
5. The risks created by lapsing programs, short-term contracts, insufficient indexation and a lack of funding continuity.

We also provided a submission on the Victorian Government's draft *Community-Based Care in Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services Framework*. This submission emphasised the expertise and essential contribution of community-managed organisations and the importance of embedding them as genuine partners within Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system.

Through this work, Mentis Assist continues to advocate not only for the people who use our services, but also for a sustainable and effective community mental health sector.

Building profile and diversifying support

A new Giving Prospectus was finalised during the year, establishing clear opportunities for one-off donations, regular giving, major gifts and gifts in wills. This provides a strong foundation for building relationships with individuals and organisations that share our commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing in the community.

We also continued developing our *Allies for Every Life* training prospectus and campaign messaging. Delivery of Mental Health First Aid training commenced with members of our Participant Advisory Group in late 2025 and was followed by four sessions for community organisations. Participant feedback was extremely positive.

The delivery of external training, including Mental Health First Aid for Southeast Community Links, continues to strengthen Mentis Assist's reputation as a trusted provider of workforce capability development. Repeat requests for training are a positive indication of both the quality of facilitation and our growing credibility in this area. Further information is provided in the *Allies for Every Life* section of this report.

Strengthening shared leadership

Considerable progress was made in developing staff-led Strategic Portfolio Areas which align with the Mentis Assist Strategic Plan. As part of our commitment to community-led and intersectional mental health support, staff will participate in committees responsible for advancing key strategic priorities.

The portfolio model is designed to:

- Strengthen community engagement and partnerships.
- Deepen organisational knowledge of the social determinants of mental health.
- Ensure diverse voices and perspectives are embedded across our work.
- Build organisational capability and distributed leadership.
- Encourage shared accountability for strategic outcomes.

Over time, these portfolios will also support greater cross-organisational collaboration, succession planning, and leadership development by enabling employees at different levels of the organisation to contribute directly to strategic priorities.

Investing in infrastructure and cybersecurity

Targeted investment in infrastructure and digital systems continued throughout the year. This included replacing ageing laptops and mobile devices to improve reliability, security, and staff capability.

We also rolled out a new Microsoft SharePoint intranet which replaced an outdated legacy intranet. The new platform has significantly improved access to organisational information, systems, policies, resources, and internal communications.

Mentis Assist continued progressing towards its Essential Eight cybersecurity maturity target in partnership with our specialist IT provider, Solution One. This work will strengthen protection against cyber threats, reduce vulnerabilities, and support the secure management of sensitive organisational and client information.

Technology governance was also enhanced through the work of our Technical Governance Committee with revised policies around use of Artificial Intelligence, procurement and approval processes, and the provision of stronger oversight and accountability for ICT expenditure and access decisions.



Culture, engagement, and psychosocial safety

Mentis Assist is committed to fostering a workplace culture that promotes employee wellbeing, inclusion, engagement, and psychosocial safety. The annual Culture, Engagement and Psychosocial Safety Survey is a key part of our workforce strategy and provides an important mechanism for monitoring organisational culture and psychosocial risks.

The 2026 survey was open for two weeks during May and was completed anonymously. Almost 70% of available employees participated, excluding those on leave and employees of the Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local, who participate in a separate workforce survey. This response rate demonstrated a strong willingness among employees to provide honest feedback and contribute to organisational improvement.

The results identified a committed workforce with strong team relationships and a high level of connection to Mentis Assist's purpose and service delivery. They also highlighted several areas requiring sustained organisational attention:

- Communication and organisational transparency.
- Psychological safety and confidence to speak up.
- Organisational connectedness.
- Career development opportunities.
- Consistency and accountability in leadership practices.

The Executive and Leadership Teams reviewed the findings and developed a targeted improvement plan addressing these five priority areas. The results will also inform the continued development of our psychosocial risk management framework, supporting contemporary workplace health and safety obligations and good governance practice.

Elevating participant voice

Work continued to strengthen the role of lived experience and participant voice within organisational communications, advocacy, and engagement. This included developing storytelling guidelines for Participant Advisory Group members and reviewing client stories for future publication.

As a result, participant experiences and perspectives are becoming more visible across Mentis Assist's communications, including our *Mentis Matters* staff newsletter, website, and social media channels. This work supports more authentic storytelling while ensuring that participant dignity, privacy, choice, and safety remain central.

Looking ahead

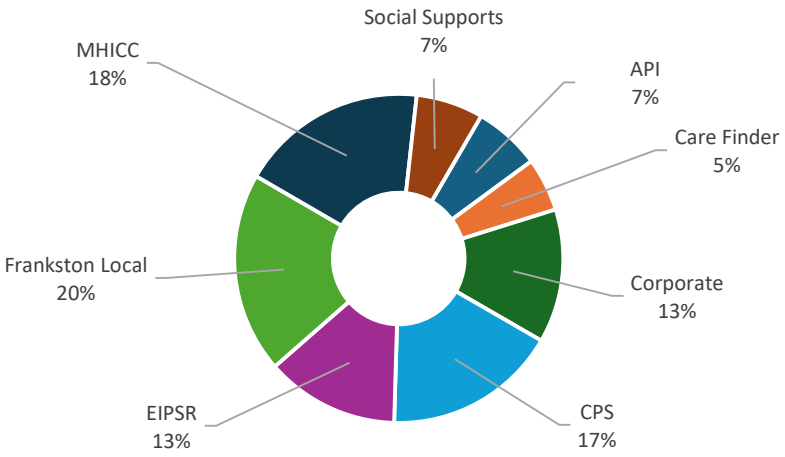
The achievements of the past year reflect Mentis Assist's commitment to thoughtful growth, strong governance, and meaningful community impact.

Our continued focus will be on implementing the initiatives commenced during the year, strengthening organisational culture and capability, expanding sustainable services, and training opportunities, and ensuring the voices of participants and communities remain central to our work.

Staffing Profile

Mentis Assist's multidisciplinary workforce brings qualifications and experience across psychology, mental health nursing and nurse practitioner practice, social work, community services, psychosocial support, peer work, care coordination and aged care navigation.

Percentage of Staff by Department - as at 30/06/2026



Staff combine clinical and professional expertise with valuable lived and living experience, supporting recovery-oriented, trauma-informed and person-centred practice. Their capabilities span assessment, outreach, care planning, group facilitation, service-system navigation and multidisciplinary collaboration. This expertise is strengthened through regular supervision, reflective practice and ongoing professional development, including advanced nursing and clinical psychology pathways. Our experienced workforce also contributes to the sector's future by providing placements, mentoring and supervision for students undertaking psychology, mental health social work, community services and related studies.

80% of employees identify as women	**61%** of employees work part-time
47 average employee age	**9%** have served for more than a decade

Participant Advisory Group Report

Overview

Mentis Assist's Participant Advisory Group (PAG) is our in-house team of consumer lived and living experience consultants. Led by the Client Engagement Officer, PAG provides a structured way for consumer perspectives to inform organisational decisions, service design, and everyday practice.

Membership draws on people who live in the Mentis Assist catchment, including current and former clients and partners who share an investment in improving mental health support services. Members are provided with training opportunities that support them to contribute their knowledge safely, purposefully and with a clear consumer focus.

PAG reports to the Board through meeting minutes and an annual report.



Responsibilities

Working with the Client Engagement Officer, PAG's mission is to ensure that the client body has a meaningful voice in Mentis Assist's organisational decisions and operations. Members contribute through:

- representation on internal committees
- equitable participation on recruitment interview panels
- routine review of client-relevant documents and information
- responsive consultation, internal advocacy and consumer representation
- client feedback interviews
- article writing and safe, purposeful story sharing.

2025-26 at a glance

PAG maintained a consistent program of engagement across governance, quality improvement, and direct client consultation during the year.

- 6 active members, with two additional members taking time away to focus on their wellbeing
- 11 formal PAG meetings held across the reporting period
- 9 Quality Committee meetings with PAG representation
- More than 40 client interviews completed as part of the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) program evaluation report
- 3 working group or workshop activities involving PAG members
- 1 Christmas gathering held for the group.

Strengthening the PAG

The group continued to develop its membership, meeting practices and shared ways of working. Changes during the year were designed to support participation, accessibility, psychological safety, and member ownership.

Key achievements over the reporting period were:

- welcomed four new members
- completed safe storytelling training
- continued to explore use of hybrid meeting options
- extended meeting times to allow for deeper discussion
- restructured meeting agendas and introduced a shared chairing approach.

Organisational impact

PAG members contributed a consumer lens at practical, operational and governance levels. Their involvement helped ensure that decisions affecting clients were informed by lived and living experience, not only organisational or clinical perspectives.

- **Annual client survey:** PAG feedback contributed to changes in how the survey was conducted, including the move from an exit-survey-led approach to the YES survey.
- **Governance and quality:** PAG now has representation on the Technical Governance Committee to ensure consumers have a voice in how Mentis Assist moves through an increasingly digital world. The PAG also represented the consumer perspective at nine Quality Committee meetings throughout the year providing input to our policies, procedures, and continuous improvement.
- **EIPSR client survey engagement:** PAG members interviewed more than 40 clients as part of the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response evaluation program, bringing direct client experience into the work.

Together, these contributions demonstrate PAG growth in moving beyond consultation into active participation in governance, quality improvement, service development, and organisational practice.

> PAG will continue to provide a direct pathway for consumer voices to shape Mentis Assist services, systems, and decisions.

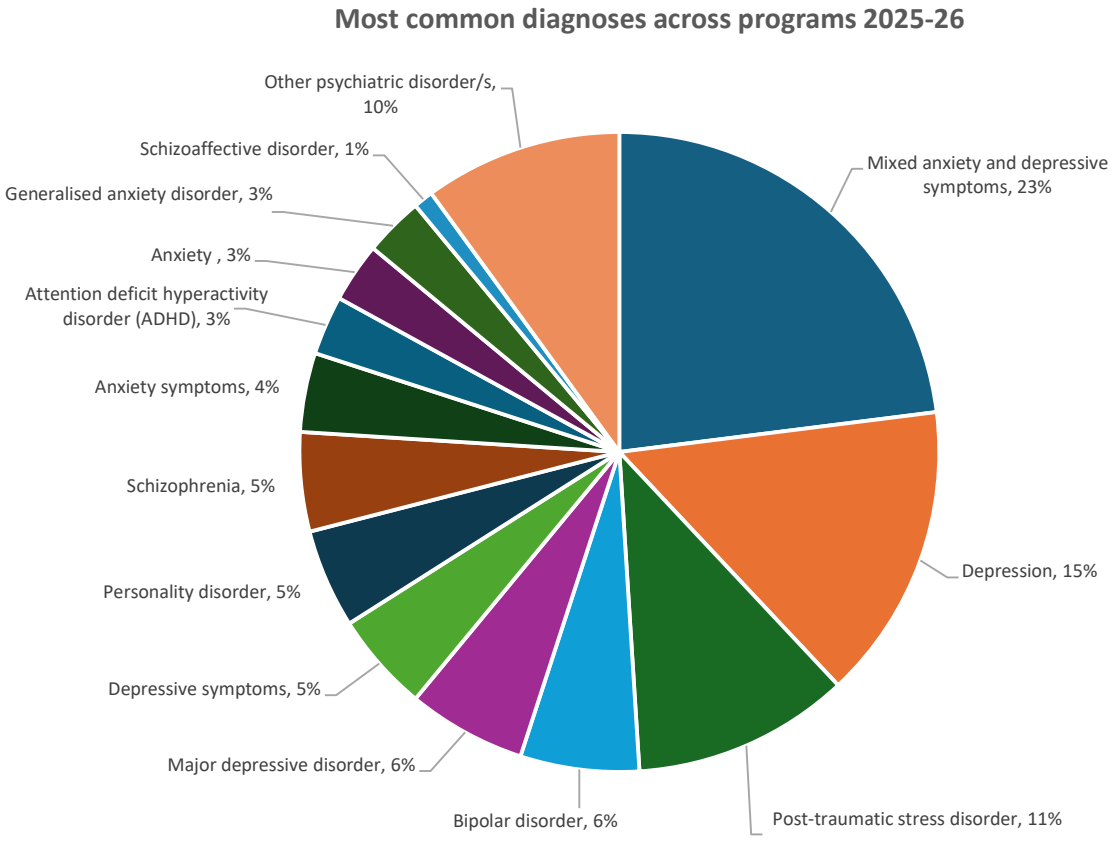
Client Services Snapshot

During 2025–26, Mentis Assist supported more than 1,250 clients and welcomed 660 new clients across our programs. More than 33,000 hours of support were delivered, with the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) program supporting the largest proportion of clients. Approximately one in ten clients accessed more than one Mentis Assist program, demonstrating the value of coordinated pathways across our services.

Who we supported

Our client cohort remained concentrated in middle adulthood, with women continuing to represent a larger proportion of clients and a gradual increase in recorded gender diversity. Programs supported people across a broad age range. Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) supported clients aged from nine to 88, while most other programs supported people aged between 18 and 65 years, and our Commonwealth Home Support Program and Care Finder Programs supported clients over the age of 65 years.

The most frequently recorded mental health presentations were mixed anxiety and depressive symptoms (23%), depression (15%) and post-traumatic stress disorder (11%). Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) supported the most diagnostically diverse client cohort, with 21 distinct diagnoses recorded.



Social and economic vulnerability

Housing insecurity remained a significant concern. Within CPS, 50 clients experienced housing vulnerability: 64% were at risk of homelessness, 22% were living in emergency accommodation and 14% were sleeping rough. In Care Finder, 30% of clients were also receiving housing support services.

Across all programs, the proportion of clients living alone increased from 13% in 2024–25 to 20% in 2025–26, a rise of seven percentage points. Loneliness can both contribute to and be intensified by mental health challenges, increasing vulnerability to anxiety and depression while making recovery and social connection more difficult. Clients living alone may have fewer informal supports to recognise changes in wellbeing, assist with daily needs or help them access services. Other clients were living with children or experiencing insecure housing, further highlighting the need for proactive engagement and coordinated support.

Income data also reflected the financial vulnerability experienced by many clients. More than 63% of Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) clients relied primarily on a government pension, with 38% of this group receiving the Disability Support Pension.



Diversity, access and reach

During the year, 8% of clients were recorded as being from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, double the 4% recorded in 2024–25. However, most clients continued to nominate English as their preferred language. While preferred language is not a complete measure of cultural diversity, the data suggests that culturally and linguistically diverse communities may remain under-represented when compared with the population diversity of Greater Dandenong and parts of Casey and Cardinia.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander clients represented 2.3% of the cohort. Although this was a slight reduction from the previous year, available comparisons suggest that representation remained broadly comparable with, or above, local population proportions across parts of the catchment and higher than the Victorian state average of 1%.

Mentis Assist continued to have its strongest reach in the Mornington Peninsula and Frankston, which together accounted for 64% of the client residential locations reported. Our services also reached clients across Casey, Cardinia, Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Glen Eira, Port Phillip, Bayside and Stonnington, reflecting our expanding service footprint across south-east Melbourne.

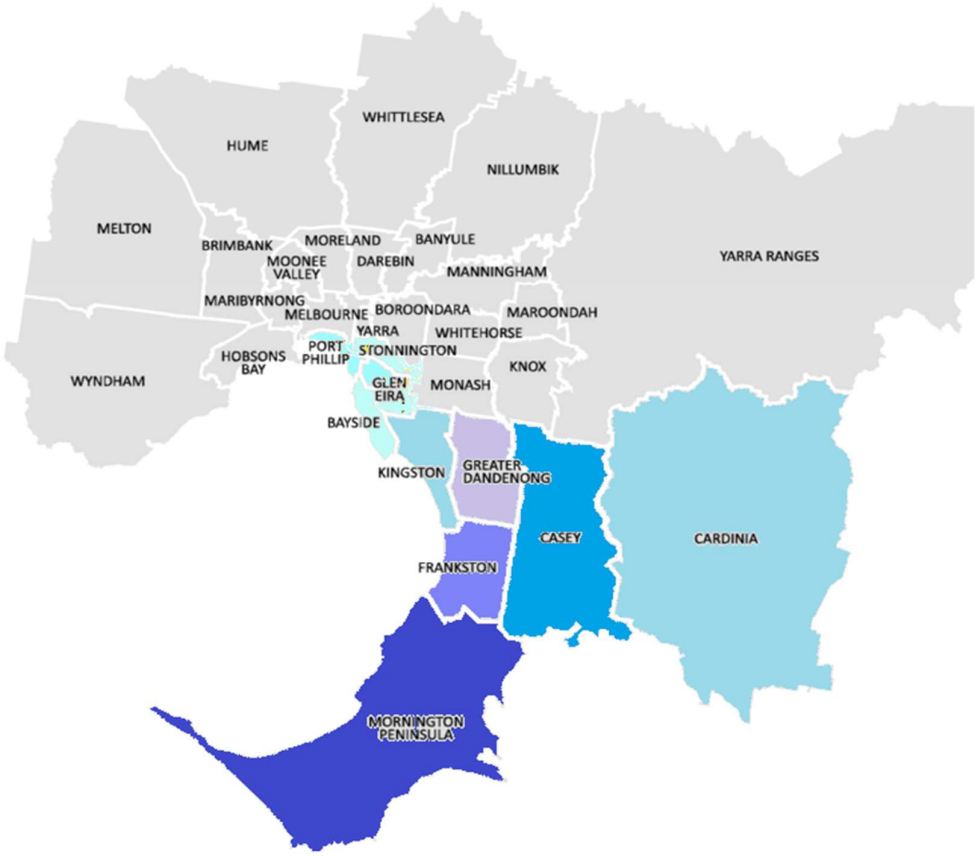
Opportunities for improvement

Overall, the data indicates that Mentis Assist is reaching key psychosocial and aged care target groups. It also identifies opportunities to strengthen engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQA+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Data scope: Client and service figures exclude activity delivered through the Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local.

Our Reach is expanding

From a local footprint to regional reach. Since beginning in 1987 with a service footprint across Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula, Mentis Assist has expanded to support clients across all 10 local government areas of south-east Melbourne.



2025-2026 Service Demand across the Region

Service Demand by Location	
Location	Percentage of clients
Mornington Peninsula	36.7%
Frankston	27.1%
Casey	13.1%
Cardinia	6.4%
Kingston	5.7%
Greater Dandenong	4.4%
Glen Eira	1.9%
Port Phillip	1.9%
Bayside	1.1%
Stonnington	0.8%
Other	0.9%
Total	**100.0%**

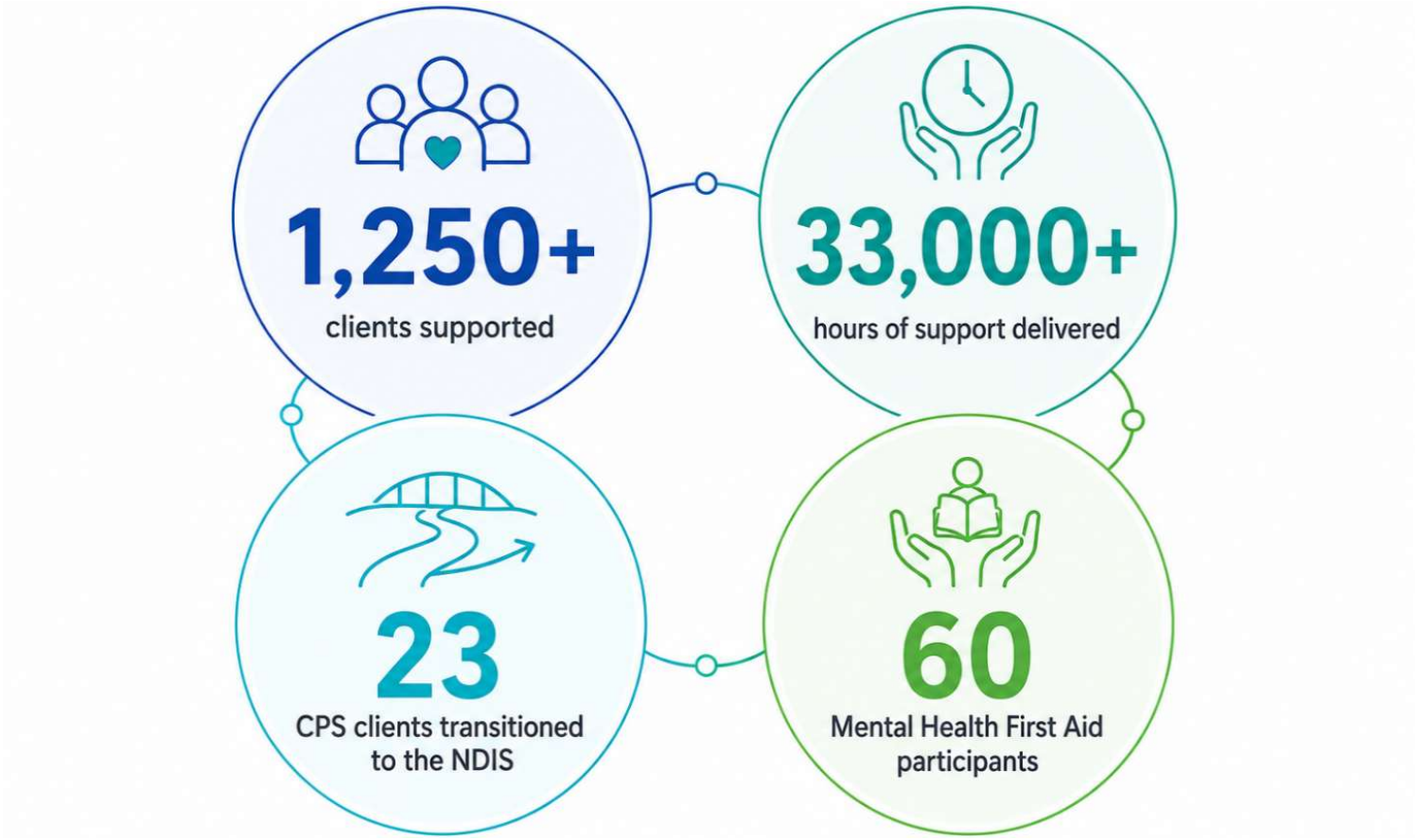
Our strongest presence remains within the communities where Mentis Assist was established, with the Mornington Peninsula and Frankston accounting for 63.8% of reported client locations. At the same time, the data demonstrates our growing regional reach. Almost one-quarter of clients lived in Casey, Cardinia or Greater Dandenong, while a further 11.4% were located across Kingston, Glen Eira, Port Phillip, Bayside and Stonnington.

This distribution reflects both the organisation's enduring connection to its original communities and its increasing capacity to respond to mental health, psychosocial and aged-care needs across a broader and more diverse region.

Continued growth beyond Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula reinforces the importance of accessible referral pathways, strong local partnerships and services that respond to the distinct needs of each community.

Data scope: Client and service figures exclude activity delivered through the Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local.

2025-26 Impact Snapshot





2025-26 Mental Health Program Updates

Social Supports and Care Finder

The 2025–26 budget year was marked by significant transition and reform across the aged care and community support sectors. Throughout this period of change, our Social Support programs which includes our HACC, Linkages, and CHSP programs, and the Care Finder program, teams remained focused on delivering high-quality, person-centred services while adapting to new requirements, strengthening partnerships and improving internal systems.

Key achievements

A major achievement was the successful transition of the Commonwealth Home Support Program's Specialised Support Services program to Individual Social Support. Careful planning enabled continuity of support for clients while the team adapted its service-delivery model and workforce responsibilities.

Mentis Assist also established its new Care Finder service during the year. This involved recruiting and onboarding staff, building relationships with key stakeholders, implementing operational and reporting processes, and successfully completing the program's first quarterly reporting cycle. This foundation positions the service to help older people experiencing vulnerability navigate the aged care system and connect with appropriate supports.

The team responded to substantial changes to the Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC-PYP), and Linkages guidelines by updating internal processes and strengthening collaboration with the new HACC Assessment Services. This work helped maintain effective and compliant referral pathways during the transition.

Documentation and quality-assurance practices were also strengthened through enhanced case-note procedures. This included the responsible use of AI-assisted tools (guided and monitored by our Quality and Technical Governance Committees), to improve consistency, efficiency and reporting outcomes, while ensuring privacy.

Responding to challenges

Periods of unplanned staff leave required the team to balance workforce capacity with continuity of service delivery. This occurred alongside increasingly complex performance and reporting obligations across multiple programs.

Ongoing aged care reforms and the reduced availability of some external services also affected access to support for people experiencing significant vulnerability. The team continued to work collaboratively with clients and service partners to identify available pathways and respond to individual needs wherever possible.

Changes to the HACC-PYP Linkages guidelines created further challenges, particularly through reduced flexibility in the use of brokerage funding. The team worked carefully within the revised program parameters while continuing to pursue practical, person-centred responses.

Looking ahead

The resilience and adaptability demonstrated by staff throughout 2025–26 provided a strong foundation for the year ahead. The Social Supports and Care Finder teams will continue to consolidate new service arrangements, strengthen referral and stakeholder partnerships, improve reporting and quality systems, and advocate for accessible supports that respond to the needs of clients and the wider community.

Commonwealth Psychosocial Support

The Commonwealth Psychosocial Support (CPS) team delivered strong results throughout 2025–26, exceeding key performance indicators despite operating with reduced EFT capacity due to reduced funding.

The team increased the frequency of CPS and joint CPS–Kindred Clubhouse groups and community outings, receiving positive participant feedback. The partnership with Kindred Clubhouse continued to strengthen, including a well-received joint presentation with a current member at the Empower CPSP meeting. This presentation also generated interest from a Northern Territory Primary Health Network, which requested further discussions about adapting the partnership model for psychosocial support delivery in rural and remote communities.

Although access to the NDIS remains challenging, the team supported 23 clients to transition successfully from CPS to the NDIS during the reporting period.

CPS program evaluation by The University of Sydney

About the Survey

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, that funds the Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program (CPSP), commissioned The University of Sydney to conduct a survey of service users. Mentis Assist was contacted by the research unit to assist in gathering consumer survey results from CPS clients. The results will be used by the Department to shape the future of commonwealth funded psychosocial support services.

The survey results show that the CPS program is reaching people with substantial and often complex psychosocial support needs. Participants were, on average, 46 years old, most were not in paid employment, and many were living with multiple mental health diagnoses, most commonly anxiety and major depressive disorder. A significant proportion also had caring responsibilities, which adds to the pressure many participants are already managing. Taken together, this suggests the program is supporting people who are experiencing persistent disadvantage and who benefit from practical, relational and recovery-oriented support.

The strongest message from the survey is that the service is highly valued because of the quality of the relationships participants have with workers. Almost all respondents described staff as knowledgeable, caring, understanding and respectful. Participants also reported that workers were available when needed and helped them to think about their lives in new and more positive ways. This indicates that the CPS program is not only delivering assistance, but doing so in a way that builds trust, safety and dignity, which are essential foundations for recovery.

The program also appears to be delivering meaningful practical and psychosocial supports. Participants most commonly identified support with social or emotional wellbeing, linking in with other services, goal setting, problem solving, and achieving personal goals. High proportions also reported receiving support to do things they found challenging and to access practical assistance such as transport, housing, finances or shopping. These findings suggest that the CPS program is flexible and responsive, addressing both immediate day-to-day barriers and longer-term recovery goals.

Importantly, respondents reported clear positive impacts on their lives. Most participants said the service had improved their confidence, hope for the future, sense of support, control over life, ability to manage daily life, and capacity to cope with challenges. Many also reported better mental health and wellbeing, stronger self-belief, more purpose in life, and greater confidence to find and use other services when needed. These outcomes suggest the CPS program is helping people build the skills, stability and confidence needed for sustained recovery and community participation.

The survey also indicates that the service is accessible and person-centred. Most respondents said it was easy to find out about the service, get in contact, apply, and begin receiving support without a long wait. Participants reported that the support was organised, reliable, matched to their needs, and delivered in a way that felt comfortable and respectful.

Most also felt able to shape their own goals and decisions about support. This reflects a service model that is collaborative rather than prescriptive, with participants experiencing choice and agency in their recovery journey.

There are also some useful areas for continued improvement. While overall satisfaction was very high, the data suggests there may be scope to strengthen support for social connection, family or natural supports, and inclusion of people close to participants where desired. A smaller proportion of respondents reported gains in making friends, contributing to others, or improving family relationships compared with other outcome areas. These findings do not detract from the strong overall results, but they point to opportunities to deepen the program's impact in community connection and broader social recovery.



Overall, the survey presents a strong picture of impact. The CPS program appears to provide trusted, consistent and practical support to people with complex mental health challenges, while also improving confidence, wellbeing, autonomy and hope. Its impact is evident not only in what support is delivered, but in how it is delivered: through respectful relationships, personalised goals, and a recovery-oriented approach that helps people feel more capable, connected and supported in their everyday lives.

Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) Program

Following the July 2025 funding extension, Bayside Health partnered with Mentis Assist to evaluate the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) program. The evaluation examined client experiences, program performance and partnership governance arrangements.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation combined service data with lived experience insights, including a purpose-designed survey completed by 40 clients. Members of the Mentis Assist Participant Advisory Group played an important role in conducting client interviews and ensuring the voices of people accessing the program remained central to the evaluation.



Client feedback highlighted four consistent strengths: emotional safety, continuity of relationships, practical assistance to navigate complex systems, and opportunities for social and community connection. Clients described EIPSR as emotionally grounding, relationally consistent and practically enabling. They valued feeling listened to, respected and free from judgement, particularly during periods of significant distress or instability.

The continuity provided by working with the same practitioner over time was especially important. It helped clients build trust, remain engaged and avoid repeatedly explaining their circumstances. Clients also valued practical assistance with forms and applications, NDIS processes, phone calls, appointments, advocacy and service coordination. Supported outings, walking groups, coffee catch-ups and community activities helped reduce isolation, rebuild confidence and reconnect people with their communities at a manageable pace.

These findings are particularly significant given the increasing complexity experienced by many EIPSR clients, including psychosocial disability, socioeconomic and health disadvantage, co-existing conditions and limited access to other supports. The evaluation demonstrated that EIPSR delivers benefits that are not always visible through traditional service measures, including increased trust, confidence, emotional safety, social connection and practical functioning.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that EIPSR is a highly valued, person-centred and recovery-oriented psychosocial support program. It found stable service delivery, improvements in measured client outcomes and a functional partnership model. The evaluation also provides a valuable foundation for considering how EIPSR must continue to evolve in response to rising client complexity and changing community needs. These insights will inform ongoing service improvement and future funding discussions.

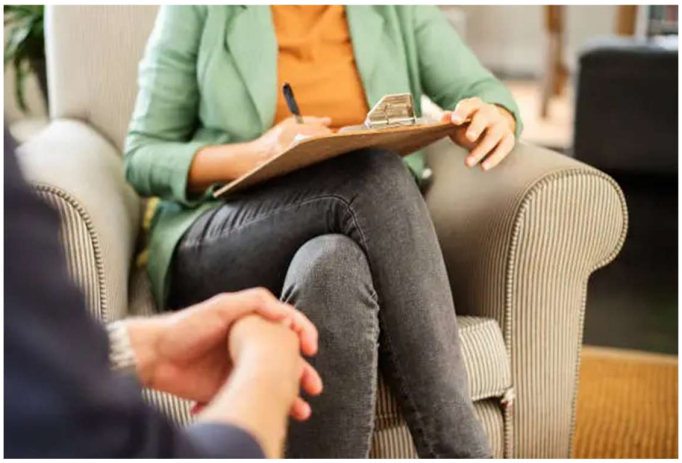
Mentis Assist sincerely thanks the clients who generously shared their experiences, the Participant Advisory Group for its contribution to the interview process, and the entire EIPSR team for embracing the evaluation and for their continued dedication to supporting clients and their recovery.

EIPSR Innovators

Two EIPSR program staff identified an opportunity through Metro Trains' Moving Melbourne Community Grants Program and took the initiative to develop and submit an application for our Creative Possibilities project. Their application successfully secured $5,000 in funding and was one of only 14 successful submissions selected from over 120 applications. The funding will support approximately 20 Mentis Assist clients to participate in creative group sessions, culminating in a public exhibition at Cube 37 in Frankston. The project will promote confidence, self-expression, social connection and wellbeing, while celebrating the skills and strengths of Mentis Assist clients within the wider community.

Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC)

Throughout 2025-26, Mentis Assist's Mental Health Integrated Complex Care (MHICC) program continued to provide coordinated, community-based support for people experiencing mental health concerns alongside complex life circumstances. The program's integrated model brought mental health nursing and care coordination together to respond to clinical needs while helping people navigate the broader issues affecting their wellbeing.



Responding to increasingly complex needs

Many people referred to MHICC were seeking access to psychiatry for diagnosis, medication support and, in some cases, evidence to support access to the NDIS. Demand for assessment relating to ADHD and autism spectrum disorders also continued to grow. At the same time, clients frequently experienced housing instability, family violence and co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues - factors that can compound mental health challenges and make recovery more difficult.

Cost-of-living pressures further reduced access to private psychiatric care, particularly for people unable to afford out-of-pocket fees but whose needs did not meet the threshold for hospital-based services. Against this backdrop, the dedication of MHICC's nurses and care coordinators remained central to helping clients stay connected, identify practical supports and work towards greater stability.

Integrated expertise and stronger pathways

Strong partnerships with local services enabled the team to connect clients with community-based supports that addressed both mental health and psychosocial needs. Additional expertise was also brought to the nursing team through an additional staff member qualifying as a nurse practitioner. While this enhanced the team's clinical capability, the wider shortage of accessible, affordable psychiatric care remained a significant service-system challenge.

Meeting demand across local communities

Demand remained high across Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula, with pronounced pressure in Rosebud and Capel Sound, where one part-time mental health nurse supported a full caseload while new referrals continued. In Casey and Cardinia, referral levels rose following deliberate work by the team to strengthen partnership pathways and local networks. The program also saw an increase in referrals for people aged 16 to 25, highlighting emerging demand for accessible support for young adults.

Looking ahead

The announcement of funding reductions for 2026-27 created considerable uncertainty for the team and will reduce workforce capacity, with implications for service reach and continuity. The experience of 2025-26 reinforces both the value of MHICC's integrated model and the importance of sustainable investment in community-based mental health care for people whose needs might otherwise go unmet.

Accessible Psychological Interventions (API)

Throughout 2025-26, Mentis Assist's Accessible Psychological Interventions (API) program continued to provide reliable psychological care across the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula catchment. A well-established pathway from intake through to treatment enabled the program to respond consistently, while strong relationships with general practitioners, primary health providers and community services supported timely access to care.

Trusted care and strong local partnerships

The program's positive reputation across local government areas was reflected in returning clients approaching their GP for a further episode of care and in referrals initiated by primary care clinicians who know and trust Mentis Assist's service. As a partner in the Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local, Mentis Assist continued to strengthen integration through shared clinical supervision, workforce movement and closer professional relationships.

Responding to increasingly complex referrals



The reporting period brought an increase in referrals for younger children with Child Protection involvement or mental health support requirements arising from family court orders. These referrals can involve diverse developmental, family and clinical needs, placing greater demands on clinicians to provide high-quality, age-appropriate care. Effective outcomes depend on coordinated support involving families, API clinicians and statutory services, including the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Adults also presented with complex psychosocial needs, including family violence, housing instability and co-occurring alcohol and other drug issues. In some cases, these immediate circumstances needed to be stabilised before a person could engage effectively in one-to-one therapy. The API team's ability to view mental health in the context of a person's broader life circumstances remained essential to safe, person-centred care.

Maintaining access within a stepped-care system

Cost-of-living pressures continued to affect clients' ability to pay for services or pursue other referral options, while demand for free and low-cost supports grew. The team also identified more referrals requiring a higher level of clinical input. Where appropriate, clients were stepped up from API to Mentis Assist's Mental Health Integrated Complex Care program, helping align support with the person's level of need.

Looking ahead

The experience of 2025-26 reinforces API's important role as an accessible entry point to psychological care and as part of a broader stepped-care response. Its consistent service model, trusted local reputation and strong partnerships provide a solid foundation for responding to changing community needs while maintaining quality, coordination and continuity of care.

Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local

As a consortium partner Mentis Assist contributed to the continued growth and maturation of the Frankston Mental Health and Wellbeing Local, supporting a person-centred, recovery-oriented service model that improved access to integrated mental health and wellbeing support across the Frankston (and wider) community.

Throughout 2025-26, the Local strengthened lived experience leadership and participation, embedding consumer and carer voices across governance, service design and quality improvement activities. Significant progress was made in developing lived experience workforce pathways, mentoring frameworks and collaborative care practices aligned with the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us".

The service responded to growing community demand, averaging 65 new registrations per month, while reducing wait times for Initial Assessment and Referral from 4-5 weeks at the beginning of the year to 1-2 days by June 2026. Improved intake processes, multidisciplinary care coordination and stronger referral pathways supported a more seamless consumer journey and enhanced access to appropriate supports.



The Local continued to expand integrated service offerings, including psychology, occupational therapy, nursing, alcohol and other drug (AOD) support, peer work, social prescribing and housing navigation. Emphasis was placed on strengthening AOD partnerships, supporting people experiencing homelessness, and increasing engagement with priority populations including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+ communities and socially isolated individuals.

Community outcomes remained positive. During the year, 705 outcome measures were completed, with average K10 psychological distress scores reducing from 34 at entry to 25 at exit, demonstrating meaningful improvements in participant wellbeing and recovery. Social prescribing initiatives, peer-led programs and strong community partnerships further supported social connection, inclusion and long-term recovery outcomes.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, Mentis Assist and consortium partners remain committed to strengthening integrated care, expanding community engagement, enhancing culturally safe and inclusive practice, and continuing to build a skilled workforce that places lived experience at the heart of service delivery.

What Clients Say About Our Service

Our 2025-26 YES (Your Experience of Services) Survey gives us plenty of client feedback to be proud of. Clients continue to describe Mentis Assist staff as respectful, approachable, flexible and genuinely caring. The survey results strongly reflect this, with 100% of respondents saying staff respected their feelings, 96% rating their overall experience as Excellent or Very Good, and high scores for being listened to, feeling positive about the future, and staff working well together. These results speak directly to the quality of relationships staff build every day.



The comments also show what clients value most: being heard without judgement, having support to get out of the house, practical help with appointments, housing and applications, and workers who keep going when things are complex. Many clients highlighted the importance of feeling safe, understood and supported as a whole person, not just as a service user. This is a strong reminder that the small, consistent interactions staff have with clients can make a lasting difference.

There are also some clear opportunities for improvement. Feedback suggests we can strengthen how we involve family, friends or other supports where this is appropriate and consented to and continue to check that care is well matched to each person's needs and goals. Clients also identified broader challenges such as service duration, funding and resource limits, access to more worker time, and referral pathways for complex needs. While not all of these issues sit fully within individual staff control, the feedback helps us see where clearer communication, better planning and stronger coordination can improve the client experience.

Why does this matter? Because client feedback is one of the most practical ways we can understand whether our services are making a real difference. It confirms what is working well, helps us notice gaps early, and gives us a shared focus for continuous improvement. Most importantly, it reminds us that respectful, person-centred, compassionate practice is not just a standard we aim for, it is something clients notice, value and remember.

Client Experience Survey Results

Overall, the YOUR ESPERIENCE OF SERVVICES (YES) survey results show a very positive client experience, with 96% rating the service excellent or very good and 100% reporting that staff respected their feelings. Strong results were also seen for; staff positivity (96%), listening (93%) and teamwork (89%).

The main opportunities for improvement are family/friend involvement (56%), care meeting client needs (70%), and aspects of service quality including service information (57%) and care plan development (64%). A key area of focus will be to increase awareness and uptake of the client satisfaction survey, enabling us to gather a broader range of feedback and better understand the client experience to inform continuous service improvement.

MENTIS CLIENT EXPERIENCE (YES) SURVEY				
Survey period: December 2025 - May 2026				
Headline Metrics				
Total Responses	**Overall excellent**	**Excellent + very good**	**Staff respect**	
28	78% (21)	96% (26)	100%	
Service Experience (% Always)			**Service Quality (% Excellent)**	
Staff respect for feelings	100%		Location convenience	74%
Staff positive for future	96%		Rights & responsibilities	68%
You were listened to	93%		Care plan development	64%
Staff teamwork	89%		Peer support access	61%
Comfortable using serice	78%		Service information	57%
Care met your needs	70%			
Family/friends involvement	56%			
DEMOGRAPHICS				
Gender			**Cultural background**	
Female	63%		English at home	100%
Male	33%		Aboriginal/TSI	8%
Other	4%		Non-Aboriginal/TSI	92%
Age Group			**Length of episode of care**	
25-34	11%		<4 months	0%
35-44	11%		4-6 months	11%
45-54	29%		6+ months	89%
55-64	43%			
Key Insights & Recommendations				
Strengths				
Staff respect rated 100% 'Always' - exceptional interpersonal care				
96% rate overall experience as 'Excellent' or 'Very good'				
High scores across listening (93%), positivity (96%) and teamwork (89%)				
Opportunities for Improvement				
Family/friends involvement lowest at 56% - review family engagement practices				
Care met needs' at 70% - opportunity for improvement				

Client Quotes & Insights

WHAT CLIENTS VALUE

- "Being listened to"
- "(My worker) always validated me"
- "Feeling no judgement"
- "Getting out of the house"
- "The outings and communication"
- "NDIS application was successful"
- "Help getting to medical appointments"
- "Security with housing"
- "Only a call away"
- "Options on where to meet"
- "Very approachable and flexible"
- "Workers went above and beyond"
- "Pushed me when I needed to be pushed"
- "Understanding care"
- "More relaxed environment than hospitals offer"

WHERE CLIENTS WANT MORE

- "They desperately need more funding and resources"
- "Need more funding for mental health assessments"
- "I wish there was ongoing service post 65-year-old"
- "I wish the program was ongoing"

KEY INSIGHTS

1. **Listening & relationships**
   Staff relationships and being listened to are the most valued aspects of service delivery.
2. **Social connection**
   Getting out, meeting people and reconnecting socially are major benefits for clients.
3. **Resource constraints**
   Clients recognise that funding and resource constraints can limit service capacity.
4. **High satisfaction**
   Many clients reported high satisfaction and suggested no areas for improvement.
5. **Practical outcomes**
   NDIS access, secure housing and support with appointments demonstrate the tangible value of our services.

Client Stories

Good News Story: Aurora

Aurora was referred to MHICC by a Family Violence social worker, at that time Aurora was relying on illicit substances to cope with significant life challenges, including the removal of their child through Child Protection, and living 90 minutes away from their child.

It took some time for MHICC to make contact, as Aurora had moved since the referral had gone through several mobile phones, destroyed during episodes of distress. Despite these setbacks, we persisted and eventually connected with Aurora. They shared that their car had broken down and were quoted $5,000 for repairs, an amount they couldn't afford. Ineligible for another NILS loan, Aurora was forced to scrap the vehicle, yet another blow during an already difficult time.

MHICC supported Aurora in linking with Windana AOD Services. They were court-mandated to undergo weekly drug screening, alongside the mental health support provided by MHICC. Through consistent engagement, initially in person, then via Microsoft Teams, we gradually built trust and rapport.

Our approach focused on Aurora's strengths, such as their love for the gym and beach walks. We offered consistent encouragement and reinforced our belief in their capacity to recover and reunite with their child. That belief became a cornerstone of our work together.



Over the following months, Aurora committed to their recovery journey. Their hard work paid off---their child has now been returned to their car. Recently, Aurora moved to a new catchment area and is now living with their child. We referred them to a similar PHN service in their new location, and the referral has been successfully picked up. Once Aurora is fully engaged with their new support team, MHICC will formally discharge them.

It's incredibly rewarding to have been part of Aurora's ongoing recovery and to witness the positive change in their life and family. This story is a testament to the power of persistence, belief and compassionate support.

Bradley's Story: Finding Support, Staying Grounded

Bradley has lived a life full of experiences, challenges, and reinvention.

Growing up in Melbourne's northern suburbs, Bradley left school early and admits he spent some of his younger years making poor decisions. Everything changed when he completed a trade apprenticeship and later joined the prison service, working at Pentridge Prison for more than a decade. *"That job got me out of all the bad stuff,"* Bradley reflects. *"It gave me structure and purpose."*

Throughout his career, Bradley worked across a wide range of industries, including corrections, manufacturing, pet care, retail and small business ownership. No matter where he worked, he tried to treat people with respect. *"I always treated people like people," he says. "That's important."*

Behind the scenes, however, Bradley was dealing with challenges that had followed him for much of his life. For many years, he experienced intense periods of anxiety, stress and emotional overwhelm. More recently, a neuropsychological assessment led to a diagnosis of ADHD and depression, helping him better understand some of the difficulties he had experienced over the years. *"I can remember having these episodes from when I was young,"* Bradley says. *"Things would build up, one thing after another, until I felt like I was ready to explode."*

The combination of ongoing mental health challenges, disrupted sleep, memory difficulties and major life stresses eventually took a significant toll. In 2025, Bradley experienced a mental health crisis and attempted to take his own life.

After receiving emergency care, he was referred to the Bayside Health HOPE team, where he began receiving support from a clinical psychologist. It was through the HOPE team that Bradley was introduced to Mentis Assist and the Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Response (EIPSR) program. When Bradley joined EIPSR, he wasn't looking for a specific outcome or milestone. *"I didn't really have goals," he explains. "I just wanted support and someone to talk to."*

What Bradley found was something simple but powerful: connection.

Through regular visits with his EIPSR Mental Health Practitioner, and participation in the weekly coffee group, Bradley found a space where he could talk openly, share experiences and connect with others. *"My EIPSR worker is wonderful," he says. "She listens, we talk, we discuss things. If I need help with something, she'll help connect me to the right support."*

For Bradley, the value of the program isn't measured by ticking off goals or completing tasks. *"The achievement is in the conversations," he says. "It's having those honest discussions with someone who listens."* The weekly coffee group has also become an important part of his routine. *"It's nice to sit down, have a coffee and talk to people. We talk about all sorts of things—dogs, fishing, life in general. There's always something to chat about."*

One of the things Bradley appreciates most is the sense of stability the program provides.

Following the retirement of his long-term psychiatrist and the lengthy process of finding new supports, there were times when he felt isolated and unsure where to turn. *"Having Mentis Assist there gives me peace of mind,"* he says*. "If something happens, I know there's someone I can call."*



Today, Bradley continues to focus on staying well and looking ahead. He enjoys spending time with his beloved dog, who accompanies him on boating and camping adventures, and is planning a future move to East Gippsland where he hopes to enjoy a quieter lifestyle closer to the water. While his mental health journey continues, Bradley says he feels more grounded than he did a year ago. When asked what he would say to someone who is struggling with their mental health, Bradley's answer is straightforward.

"Reach out and talk to someone," he says. "A lot of people need that face-to-face support, someone they can trust. That's what Mentis Assist has been for me."

Staff Reflections: Olivia's Story

With Small Steps on a Long Road

One of the privileges of working at Mentis Assist is the opportunity to walk alongside people as they take the next step in their journey. Sometimes those steps are small and almost invisible. Sometimes they are life changing. Either way, they matter.

Recently, I had the privilege of supporting Olivia, a 29-year-old woman who had welcomed her fifth child, a beautiful baby boy, just two months earlier. Throughout much of her life, she has lived with significant mental health challenges. Despite seeking help from a number of services over the years, she never felt she had the answers she needed to truly understand what she was experiencing.

When Olivia came to Mentis, her goal was simple yet profound: to gain a clearer understanding of her mental health so she could improve not only her own quality of life but also that of her children.



Together, we explored options and applied for funding through the Queen's Fund to enable Olivia to access a comprehensive assessment. Her application was successful, so she only needed to contribute a small amount towards the cost.

The assessment and diagnosis gave her something she had been seeking for many years—clarity. For the first time, she could better understand her mental health and how her mind works. She shared that this understanding was about much more than receiving a diagnosis. It was about making sense of her experiences, beginning a journey of healing, and breaking the cycle of dysfunction so she could parent her children as she had always hoped.

Knowing that she now has access to the right supports and interventions gives her the opportunity to better manage her symptoms and to continue building a healthier, more stable future for herself and her family.

For me, Olivia's story is a reminder that recovery is not about a single big breakthrough. It is about many small steps taken over time. The funding application, the assessment, the conversations, the support—each step helped move her a little further along her path.

We don't always see the outcomes of the work we do. Much of our work happens quietly behind the scenes, and we often never know what happens after someone leaves our service. That is simply the nature of supporting people through difficult times.

But every now and then, we are fortunate enough to witness the difference those small steps can make. Seeing Olivia begin to understand herself with compassion and knowing that this understanding has the potential to positively shape the lives of her five children, is incredibly rewarding.

Stories like hers remind me why I do this work. They renew my enthusiasm, strengthen my belief in the importance of our work, and reinforce the idea that every conversation, every application, and every act of encouragement can help someone take the next step on a long road.

Keeping Competent

For the past few years Mentis Assist has increased our focus on ensuring staff have access to training that helps improve their practice. In this reporting period, staff have completed the following courses to complement the work they do and ensure they are staying abreast of current trends, and changes to legislation in the mental health sector:

2025-26 Training topics:

- *Dealing with Suicidal Feelings*
- *Understanding and Responding to Mental Health Crisis and Suicide*
- *Suicide awareness and prevention*
- *Open Disclosure Competency Assessment*
- *Violence in the Healthcare Sector: Predicting, preventing, and managing violence*
- *Diversity and inclusion*
- *Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consumers, Families, Support and Communities*
- *Managing Addiction*
- *Understanding and Responding to Substance Use and Addiction*
- *Switch On Caring*
- *Delivering Holistic and Collaborative Assessment and Care Planning*
- *Enabling Reflective and Supportive Ways of Working*
- *The Importance of Self Reflection*
- *Comprehensive Care Strategies for Patients with Mental Health Challenges*
- *Substance Use Disorder Advice (Signposts)*
- *Addiction Treatment and good practice*
- *Understand the importance of equality, diversity, inclusion and human rights: for Health and Social Care*
- *Care Act - Review of Care and Support Plans*
- *Delivering Compassionate Care, Support and Treatment*
- *Working Effectively with Digital Technology*

Staff also accessed training through their individual learning and development plans. Additionally, we invested training resources for three staff to become Mental Health First Aid Facilitators, and a staff member to complete Worksafe Victoria accredited Health and Safety Representative Training.

To help ensure we are developing future leaders for the mental health sector, Mentis Assist also provided our first biennial scholarship valued at $3000 with the inaugural recipient completing a Certificate in Business Leadership.



Allies for Every Life – Mental Health First Aid

With generous support from Mental Health First Aid Australia, 3 Mentis Assist staff members were trained as facilitators for Mental Health First Aid.

In 2025-26, Mentis Assist delivered our first five sessions of Standard Mental Health First Aid training, supporting sixty participants to recognise and respond appropriately to people experiencing mental health problems or crisis situations. We also provided this training to all our Participant Advisory Group members. We deliver the training under our 'Allies for Every Life' banner which is our commitment to enhancing mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and empowering communities. The name 'Allies for Every Life' emphasises the power of allyship, so that no life is left behind, and it reflects our commitment to inclusive support for all people.

By equipping individuals in the community with the skills and confidence to respond to mental health crises, we contribute to creating localised, supportive networks to improve mental health outcomes where people live, work, and socialise.

The two-day course is intensive and provides participants with the skills to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions, respond effectively in a crisis, and support individuals to seek appropriate professional help.

Post-course evaluation results demonstrated extremely high satisfaction with both the training and its facilitation.

Training impact

Across measures of course content, relevance, and confidence:

96% of responses rated 4 or 5	**4.9** course relevance
4.9 ease of understanding	**4.9** confidence recognising signs
4.9 confidence encouraging help-seeking	**4.8** confidence asking about suicide
100% received the participant manual	**100%** would recommend the course

Participants particularly valued the practical application of the material, real-life examples, group discussions and opportunities to consider how the Mental Health First Aid action plan could be applied across different situations.

> **"The real-life examples, group discussions and practical scenarios were very helpful."**
>
> **"It was informative, practical and very helpful for understanding mental health and how to support people in crisis situations."**

MH First Aid Facilitator performance

Our training facilitator received the highest possible average rating 5 out of 5 across all four facilitator measures:

- Engaging presentation style.
- Approachability and responsiveness to questions.
- Knowledge of the subject matter.
- Effective facilitation.

Participant comments consistently described the facilitation as knowledgeable, engaging, relatable and practical. Respondents also valued the creation of a safe and supportive environment in which sensitive topics could be discussed and questions welcomed.

> **"Excellent engagement with participants, allowing participants to feel heard and providing the opportunity for questions and feedback."**
>
> **"The trainer explained things clearly and created a supportive learning environment."**

Learning and continuous improvement

Although feedback was overwhelmingly positive, several participants commented on the length and intensity of the two-day course. Suggestions included:

- Incorporating additional practical activities.
- Allowing more time to explore particular mental health conditions.
- Reducing or more clearly explaining technical terminology.
- Providing additional breaks or adjusting the pace where required.

These findings will inform the planning and delivery of future Mental Health First Aid training.



Cybersecurity Enhancements

Strengthening Our Cybersecurity and Privacy

The Essential Eight is aThe Essential Eight is a cybersecurity framework developed by the Australian Signals Directorate to help organisations protect their systems and information from common cyber threats. It includes practical safeguards such as application controls, timely software updates, multi-factor authentication, restricted administrative access and secure backups.

Mentis Assist is implementing a comprehensive cybersecurity improvement program that will increase our average Essential Eight maturity rating from 0.125 to 2.6 out of a level 3 rating scale. This uplift has been independently assessed and verified by our IT specialists at Solution One.

A target score of 2.6 represents a strong level of cybersecurity maturity on a scale where 3 is the maximum. It reflects six of the eight Essential Eight controls reaching Level 3, with application hardening at Level 2 and restriction of administrative privileges at Level 1.

These remaining controls require careful, staged implementation because overly restrictive settings can disrupt essential applications, staff workflows and IT support. The 2.6 target therefore balances strong cybersecurity protection with the need to maintain reliable and accessible services. Once implementation is complete, the controls can be reviewed and strengthened further where appropriate. Implementation is currently underway and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

The program includes strengthened application controls, vulnerability scanning, managed IT support, business continuity and disaster recovery testing, and a formal incident response plan. These measures will help prevent malicious or unauthorised access, identify and address security weaknesses earlier, and support a coordinated response if an incident occurs.

Importantly, these improvements strengthen the confidentiality, integrity and availability of sensitive client, employee and organisational information. They also improve our ability to recover critical systems, maintain services during disruptions and protect the privacy and trust of the people and communities we support.

Strategic Plan Progress

Mentis Assist made solid progress during the first year of its 2025–2028 Strategic Business Plan. Across the plan's five strategic pillars, 56 actions were monitored: six were completed, 32 were progressing on track and 18 were scheduled for future delivery. This means 68% of all actions were either completed or actively progressing at year-end. We've also adopted an AI program to help track and report on our Strategic Plan progress.

People

All seven People Plan actions were on track. Key achievements include completing the staff Culture, Engagement and Psychosocial Safety Survey, developing a responsive action plan and commencing consultation on a Culture and Engagement Strategy. Mentis Assist also invested in leadership development, staff scholarships, internal career pathways, Mental Health First Aid trainer capability, employee recognition and psychosocial wellbeing awareness.

Brand and Market

Client voice remained central to the development of the Mentis Assist brand. Participant Advisory Group involvement was strengthened through leadership engagement, storytelling training and regular contributions at all-staff meetings. Client stories were increasingly incorporated into organisational communications, while social media activity expanded and foundational work commenced on the website refresh and search engine optimisation.

Funding and Philanthropy

Funding and Philanthropy recorded the strongest overall progress. Mentis Assist responded to several significant tender opportunities and successfully secured funding to establish the Outer South Care Finder service. New income opportunities were also developed through external Mental Health First Aid training, supported by an organisational training prospectus and early work to strengthen philanthropic giving and strategic partnerships.

Technology and Systems

Mentis Assist achieved accreditation against the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards in October 2025 and established a Technical Governance Committee to oversee digital innovation, privacy and responsible artificial intelligence use. Mandatory digital and AI-related training was completed, AI-assisted processes were tested within Social Supports programs, and new project-management and operational tools were explored.

Operational Performance

Progress continued toward embedding the refreshed Mentis Assist Model of Care across programs. The model was introduced to staff, while work progressed on strengthening performance reporting, sharing service success stories and contributing to external mental health reform and service-system design. Microsoft Copilot was selected as the organisation's preferred AI platform, accompanied by staff digital capability training.

Looking ahead

The next phase of the plan will build on these foundations by further embedding the Model of Care, strengthening operational and outcome measurement, progressing the website and digital strategy, improving organisation-wide data capability, and translating strategic initiatives into consistent practice across all programs.

Finance Report



Mentis Assist recorded an operating surplus of $424,857 for 2025–26, an increase of 9% from the $389,948 surplus achieved in the previous year. Total income remained stable at $9.27 million, while total expenditure decreased slightly to $8.84 million. This resulted in an operating surplus margin of 4.6%, compared with 4.2% in 2024–25.

Over the past two financial years, Mentis Assist has achieved a combined surplus of $814,805, offsetting the loss incurred in 2023–24 following the organisation's exit from NDIS service delivery. With the volatility previously associated with NDIS income and expenditure removed, the organisation has experienced greater year-on-year financial stability.

Government grants continued to represent approximately 97% of total income.

Mentis Assist further strengthened its relationship with the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network through the commencement of the Care Finder program in April 2026, the second new SEMPHN-funded program awarded to the organisation in two years.

The balance sheet also strengthened during 2025–26. Total assets increased by 7.5% to $4.13 million, while total liabilities decreased by 6.9% to $1.83 million. As a result, net assets increased by 22.7% to $2.30 million, providing a stronger financial foundation for future service delivery and organisational development.

Mentis Assist continues to review its investment strategies to ensure its financial resources are used effectively and responsibly. As the organisation approaches 40 years of supporting people experiencing mental health challenges, it remains focused on maintaining financial sustainability while expanding access to services across south-east Melbourne and beyond.

Summary Statement of Profit or Loss		
	2026	2025
Commonwealth Govt. Grant Income	$4,816,983	$4,911,645
State Govt. Grant Income	$4,196,471	$4,089,147
Client Program Income	$7,894	$4,588
Interest Received	$60,330	$79,988
Sundry Income	$184,721	$194,488
Total Income	**$9,266,399**	**$9,279,856**
Total Expenses	**$8,841,542**	**$8,889,908**
Profit/(Loss)	**$424,857**	**$389,948**

Extract of Balance Sheet		
	2026	2025
Total Assets	**$4,130,362**	**$3,842,009**
Total Liabilities	**$1,830,824**	**$1,967,328**
Net Assets	**$2,299,538**	**$1,874,681**

Thank You to Our Supporters

The important work we do to support our local community would not be possible without the generous funding support provided by;

- South East Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN) who fund our Mental Health Integrated Complex Care Program, Accessible Psychological Interventions Program, Commonwealth Psychosocial Support Program, and our Care Finder Program.
- Victorian Government Department of Families Fairness & Housing (DFFH) who fund our Home and Community Care Programs and our Early Intervention Psychosocial Support Program through Bayside (formerly Peninsula) Health.
- Commonwealth Government Department of Health who fund our Commonwealth Home Support Programs.
- Metro Trains who fund our Community Art Project.
- Peninsula Hot Springs who fundraise to provide brokerage support for clients.
- Mental Health First Aid Australia who provided training for our staff facilitators.

We would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to our committed partners and supporters including:

- Kindred Clubhouse
- Wellways Australia
- Bayside (Peninsula) Health
- Windana
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Peninsula Community Legal Centre
- Peninsula Community Support Centre
- WAYSS Ltd
- Housing Choices Australia
- Chisholm Institute
- Reclink
- Frankston City Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire
- Solution One
- Maguire Legal
- Bolton Property

Our thanks extend to the many other organisations and support services that share our passion and commitment to helping vulnerable people across the Southeast Melbourne region.

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For better mental health