



**MENTAL HEALTH  
FIRST AID®**  
INTERNATIONAL

# **Strategic Plan**

## **2024–2030**





### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' continuing culture and ongoing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



### Recognition of Lived Experience

Mental Health First Aid International wishes to acknowledge people with lived and living experience of mental health problems and suicidality, and their loved ones who care for and support them. With diverse identities, challenges and life experiences, each journey is unique and invaluable. Thank you to those who have courageously shared stories to help educate the global community.



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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The story of Mental Health First Aid International began in Canberra, Australia, on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, in the year 2000. Our co-founders, Betty Kitchener AM and Professor Tony Jorm, had an idea: We have physical first aid, but why don't we have mental health first aid?

Through the work of Betty and Tony and many others, a global movement has been built, dedicated to providing evidence-based mental health first aid education, for everyone. Over 1.4 million people have been trained in Australia, and over 7 million around the world.

This has only been possible to achieve by working in partnership. With academic researchers, who build and grow the evidence base that underpins Mental Health First Aid. With instructors, who deliver high-quality training in workplaces, schools, universities and many other community settings. With international partners, whose energy has expanded Mental Health First Aid to 30 countries and counting. With governments and philanthropic partners whose support has enabled the development of Mental Health First Aid training for new community and cultural contexts, including Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Our new Strategic Plan seeks to build on the achievements of the past 25 years, as we strive towards our vision of 'A world where we all have the skills and confidence to support people experiencing mental health problems.'

The plan's initiatives and actions aim to renew the spirit of collective effort and collaboration that underpins our movement in Australia and around the world, as we look to 2030 and beyond.

Mental Health First Aid International looks forward to working with all of our partners, to enable more people, in more places, to gain practical skills and new confidence to have conversations about mental health. Because we know that such a conversation can change a life. It may even save one.

**Krystian Seibert**  
Chair, Mental Health First Aid International



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Mental health challenges are a global concern, impacting individuals and communities worldwide. High rates of psychological distress, mental illness and suicide across the world, coupled with the impact of economic uncertainty, global conflicts and natural disasters, underscore the urgent need for effective early intervention and prevention strategies.

As the global leader of mental health first aid education, Mental Health First Aid International (MHFAI) is strategically positioned to advance early intervention and prevention efforts to drive meaningful change on a global scale. This Strategic Plan lays the groundwork for us to do just this, by focusing on seven new strategic pillars: Research, Quality and Innovation; Global Impact; Local Reach; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; Lived Experience; Public Policy and Advocacy; and Sustainability.

This Strategic Plan expands our focus to take a whole-of-system approach, recognising the need to ensure that the people our community supports can get the professional help they need. It is not enough to train people to provide immediate support – the system they refer to must be capable of offering timely and effective care.

This new direction positions us to advocate for, and strengthen our contribution to, a coordinated, unified mental health system in both in Australia and globally, providing early intervention and prevention before issues escalate into crises, thus reducing the burden on the healthcare system.

This includes recognising that some populations – such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous populations worldwide – experience mental illness and suicide at far greater rates than the non-Indigenous population, and require urgent, culturally informed support to help close the gap.

We are proud to lead the global mental health first aid movement. By leveraging the international MHFA community – from our partners to MHFAiders – we can amplify our efforts both locally and globally, and contribute to the ongoing development and reach of MHFA to create continuing circles of safety and support worldwide.

**Angus Clelland**  
CEO, Mental Health First Aid International

## OUR VISION

A world where we all have the skills and confidence to support people experiencing mental health problems.

## OUR PURPOSE

To grow a global movement dedicated to providing evidence-based mental health first aid education for everyone.

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

We are Mental Health First Aid International.

We are a global health promotion charity dedicated to the provision of evidence-based and informed education programs that increase mental health literacy, reduce stigma, and help people develop the skills needed to encourage people to seek professional help.

We aim to create circles of safety and support around people experiencing mental health problems.

We are building a global movement dedicated to prevention and early intervention to reduce the impact of psychological distress and mental health problems in families, communities, educational settings, and workplaces.

We are purpose driven and focused on impact.

We are grounded in high-quality research and evaluation and value lived experience.

We are committed to health equity and to supporting priority need populations.

We exist to change and save lives every day.

## OUR PRINCIPLES

### Equity

We are committed to overcoming discrimination and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to services and information.



### Collaboration

We work cooperatively, share knowledge, and embrace new ideas and innovation.



### Integrity

We are responsible for our actions, act with integrity and honesty, and are guided by ethical and moral principles in all that we do.



### Respect

We embrace diversity and always treat people with respect and dignity.



### Agility

We strive to be responsive, flexible and effective, and have impact by making the best use of resources and encouraging innovation.



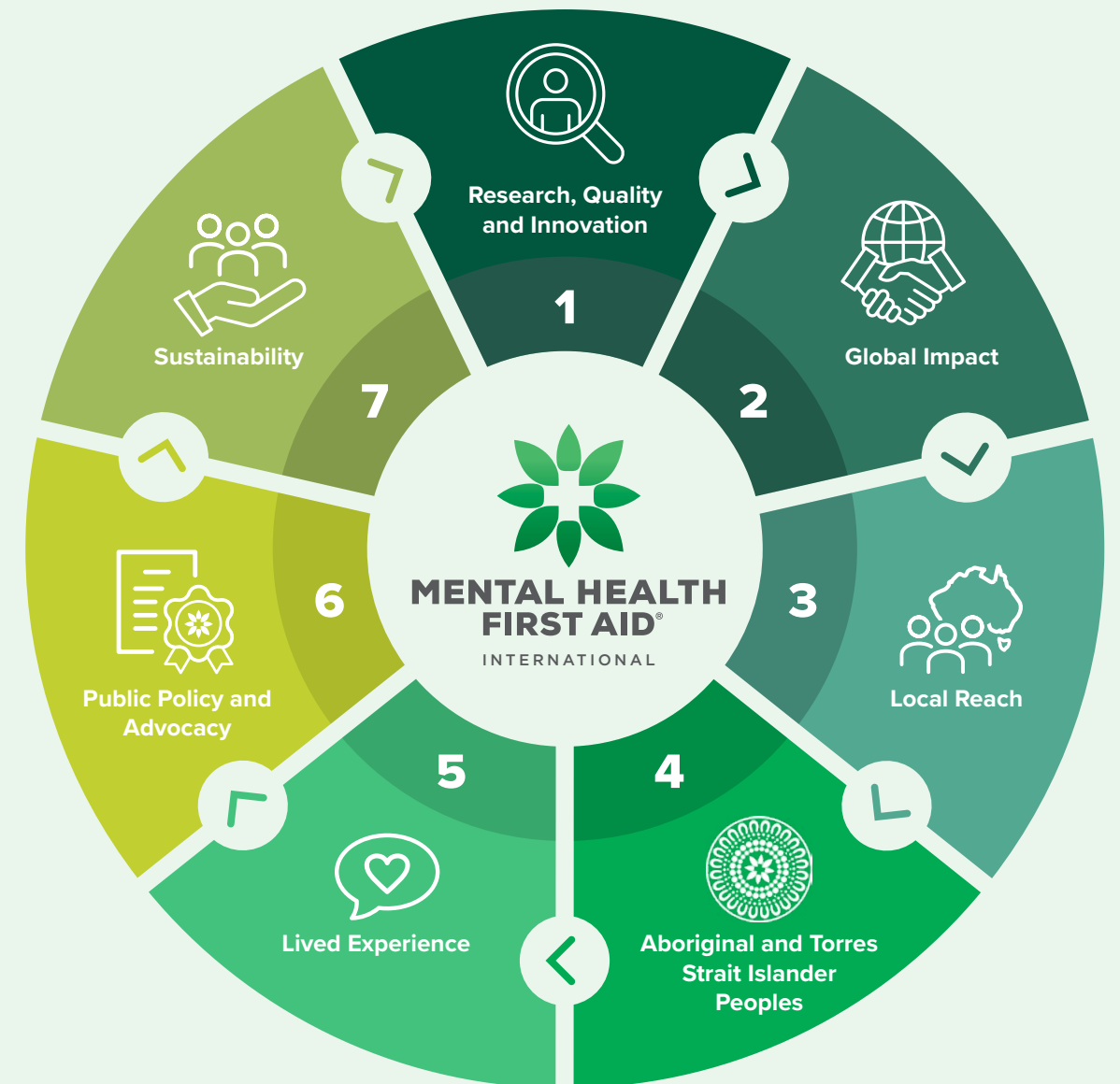


## OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

Over the next six years, we will focus on seven interrelated strategic pillars:

- 1. Research, Quality and Innovation**  
 We will invest in research, curriculum design, quality, and innovation to deliver high-impact mental health education services worldwide
- 2. Global Impact**  
 We will increase our impact by supporting the expansion of MHFA program delivery through partnerships across the globe.
- 3. Local Reach**  
 We will support, grow, and mobilise the Australian MHFAider and Instructor networks to bring MHFA programs to every community, workplace and educational setting and to support mental health reform.
- 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples**  
 We are committed to reconciliation and will prioritise and promote the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.
- 5. Lived Experience**  
 We will promote lived experience in the leadership, design, and delivery of everything we do.
- 6. Public Policy and Advocacy**  
 We will work with our partners to ensure that MHFA training is incorporated into government prevention and early intervention strategies across the globe.
- 7. Sustainability**  
 We will use resources efficiently and responsibly and always encourage continuous improvement and innovation, enabling people to achieve their best.

## Strategic Pillars 2024–2030





## 1. Research, Quality and Innovation

### Strategy

We will invest in research, curriculum design, quality, and innovation to deliver high-impact mental health education services worldwide.

### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Ensure lived experience, consumer/market needs, mental health research, MHFAI guidelines, and clinical, curriculum and educational expertise informs our program design and advocacy.
- 2 Leverage the expertise, innovation and networks of our International Partners.
- 3 Establish a formal research and evaluation framework to support our educational programs.
- 4 Establish an International Research Program to support MHFA partners world-wide.
- 5 Implement an effective quality management framework to support MHFA program delivery in Australia and overseas.
- 6 Commit to the delivery of sound and effective program governance.
- 7 Invest in new technology to enhance user experience and improve quality delivery.
- 8 Be agile in response to the changing needs of stakeholders in Australia and overseas.
- 9 Develop, update, promote and disseminate MHFAI guidelines, leveraging MHFAI's expertise and network to promote widespread adoption of these guidelines globally.

### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- We have expanded our in-house research, mental health, curriculum design and education expertise.
- We have an established International Research Program and an effective research and evaluation framework.
- We have published research papers and evaluation reports across the international network.
- We can invest in high impact research and evaluation.
- We have achieved appropriate international and domestic accreditation to support quality and ensure we are competitive for government funding.
- We are agile and responsive to changing curriculum needs and maintain educational programs that are continuously reviewed and updated with assistance of our partners and independent experts.
- We have effectively integrated new technology into our curriculum and organisation to enhance user experience and support quality.



## 2. Global Impact

### Strategy

We will increase our impact by supporting the expansion of MHFA program delivery through partnerships across the globe.

### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Establish an International Secretariat to support our partners.
- 2 Facilitate international collaboration and learning through communities of practice, research, summits, and regular dialogue.
- 3 Work with our partners to increase the reach of MHFA across the globe.
- 4 Establish an international recognition and accreditation scheme that will allow MHFAiders and Instructors to have their qualifications recognised internationally.
- 5 Engage with our partners to explore new options for global governance for MHFA.

### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- Our partners are satisfied with the level of engagement and support we provide.
- Our partners are actively involved in information and best practice sharing.
- International growth of MHFA has accelerated, with at least 12 million trained worldwide by 2030.
- Our MHFAider and Instructor accreditation program is recognised internationally.
- We have implemented new approaches to governance that strengthen international collaboration, address risk and leverage the international MHFA movement to advocate for change.







### 3. Local Reach

#### Strategy

We will support, grow, and mobilise the Australian MHFAider and Instructor networks to bring MHFA programs to every community, workplace, and educational setting and to support mental health reform.

#### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Establish effective consultative and engagement structures to support the MHFAider and Instructor networks.
- 2 Prioritise working with strategic stakeholders including governments, industries, professional associations, unions, and sector peaks to support the expansion of MHFA across Australia.
- 3 Develop sustainable engagement models and complementary services to assist organisations to embed MHFA as an essential part of their wellbeing strategies.
- 4 Engage with diverse communities to better understand the needs of marginalised communities.

#### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- Our MHFAiders and Instructors are satisfied with the support we provide.
- MHFA programs are accessible to all educators and students in Australia, as well as to all members of key sectors and industries.
- 3 million Australians have received MHFA education by 2030.
- Our organisation recognition scheme is viewed as the 'gold standard'.
- We have established strategic partnerships with industries, professional associations, unions and sector peaks.
- Funding for MHFA delivery is routinely included in state, territory, and federal government budgets.
- We are accepted as a strategic partner by organisations that represent priority populations.



### 4. Aboriginal And Torres Strait Islander Peoples

#### Strategy

We are committed to reconciliation and will prioritise and promote the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of Australia's First Peoples.

#### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Prioritise the expansion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and workforce that are culturally capable and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 2 Increase our organisational Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability.
- 3 Increase organisation-wide priority and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing.

#### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and workforce are well resourced.
- We can retain and grow our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MHFAider and Instructor network.
- Cultural capability training is embedded across the organisation, Instructor training, programs, and professional development for all staff.
- We have successfully implemented our Reconciliation Action Plans.
- We engage and collaborate respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples to better understand and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing are seen as organisation-wide priorities and considered across departments.



## 5. Lived Experience

### Strategy

We will promote lived experience in the leadership, design, and delivery of everything we do.

### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Support an inclusive, affirming, and non-stigmatising organisational culture.
- 2 Contribute to the sector innovative lived experience led approaches to program design and delivery.

### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- Our Board members, managers, and staff are comfortable sharing their own lived experiences.
- We have established a dynamic and effective Lived Experience Advisory Group.
- We have established a network of MHFAiders who are willing to speak publicly about their experiences and the benefits of MHFA education.



## 6. Public Policy & Advocacy

### Strategy

We will work with our partners to ensure that MHFA training is incorporated into government prevention and early intervention strategies across the globe.

### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Build our government relations, public policy, and advocacy capabilities.
- 2 Grow our profile to ensure that we are highly effective in our advocacy efforts and can influence government decision making.
- 3 Engage with like-minded organisations, peak bodies, and our international partners to advocate for reform and investment in prevention and early intervention.

### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- MHFA education is accepted as a standard inclusion in government prevention and early intervention strategies.
- We have a 'seat at the table' with state, federal and international governments.
- Our publications and position statements create impact and raise public awareness.
- Our brand becomes widely known and we are regularly approached by the media for comment on key issues.
- Our research papers and evaluation reports are used by policy makers and commissioning bodies to improve mental health services and systems.







## 7. Sustainability

### Strategy

We will use resources efficiently and responsibly and always encourage continuous improvement and innovation, enabling people to achieve their best.

### Actions

To do this we will:

- 1 Build a strong culture based on shared values, expectations, and behaviours.
- 2 Continuously improve our financial management capabilities and build sufficient reserves to support organisational sustainability and future investment in research and other priorities.
- 3 Continuously improve our corporate and program governance.
- 4 Strengthen our workforce model to ensure that we can attract, retain, and develop the skilled people we need to achieve our purpose.
- 5 Build and support a diverse workforce that reflects the communities and individuals we support, and which values and leverages lived experience.
- 6 Develop our digital and operational infrastructure, systems, and capability so that we can better deliver high-quality services at scale and meet changing compliance requirements.

### Outcomes

We will know we are successful when:

- Staff engagement exceeds relevant sector benchmarks.
- We have a diverse staff profile.
- Lived experience is represented at all levels of the organisation.
- We have integrated new technology to support our work.
- We are financially and environmentally sustainable.
- We have sufficient reserves to cover contingencies and fund future investment in research, evaluation and development.



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# For Anyone. For Everyone.

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