SANE
We're people
like you.

sane.org

BRIDGING
THE GAPS

TO END MENTAL
HEALTH INEQUITY,
DISCRIMINATION,
AND EXCLUSION.

WHAT'S

INSIDE.

SANE supports all people in Australia affected by complex mental health issues.

We exist to break barriers, raise expectations, and champion the voices of people with lived experience and their families and communities; to increase peer-led, connected support and drive systemic change.

OUR PURPOSE.

OUR VALUES.

"We've come to a point where people aren't just asking about how we can share our stories but about how we can change things. The only way we're going to solve this and cure this is to go beyond people talking about their experiences ... it's about suggesting what we think might help people heal."

Cameron Solnordal
SANE Peer Ambassador and Director

Respect

- We focus on the whole person and their strengths, not the illness, and believe everyone is entitled to a better life.
- We treat everyone with grace and dignity while welcoming robust and constructive discussion.
- We communicate our appreciation to those who give their time, advice, and financial resources.

Responsibility

- We do what is right, however difficult that might be.
- We are accountable for the decisions we make.
- We take good care of our physical and mental health and seek help when we need it.

Celebration

- We celebrate great achievements (big or small) by ourselves and others.
- We warmly welcome everyone who comes through our doors, and we create a fun, flexible and inspiring workplace that fosters personal and professional growth.
- We broadcast to the world heroic stories of courage, resilience, and recovery.
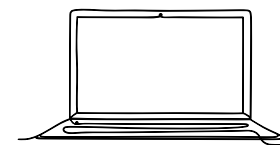
Innovation

- We have a passion for learning and disseminating creative solutions to real-world problems.
- We embrace technology to build community and provide helpful information.
- We seek out new ways to have greater impact through research, testing, and evaluation – always informed by people's lived experience of complex mental health issues.

Collaboration

- We partner with others who share our vision, values, passion, and commitment.
- We work with people with lived experience of complex mental health issues to build better services, policies, and programs.
- We encourage and support each other to do the best work we possibly can by listening, communicating, and working as one team.

FOREWORD FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.

Whenever I'm asked what SANE does, I answer, "we fight against inequity for people with complex mental health issues, and their families."

Inequity underpins everything.

People with complex mental health issues find inequity within the health system, because where you live and how much money you have still determine the care you receive. Inequity is structural, geographic, and economic, disproportionately affecting those with the most complex needs. Too often, despite decades of reform, people still cannot find the help they need when they need it.

They find inequity in their workplaces – despite recent gains and heightened awareness – which do not target nor are designed for people with complex mental health issues, neurodiversity, or psychosocial disability. They find inequity every day in media reports that stigmatise them with outmoded conceptions. They find it in government services, which do not take the complexity of their health issues into account. And they find it in their communities, which do not expect them to lead good, productive lives.

The question for SANE as we position ourselves for the future is: 'How do we eliminate inequity for people with complex mental health issues?' The short answer is to pivot our energies towards action. We must take action to bridge the gaps in the system, break down barriers and change the course of life for people with complex mental health issues.

In 2021, whilst supporting over 21,000 Australians with counselling on our helpline and connecting with the community through more than 145,000 visits to our online peer forums, SANE engaged widely with our Peer Ambassadors, leaders, government, and advocates around Australia to help us create a ten-year vision for the world we want to see.

We wanted specific and measurable goals focussed very deliberately on building on our core strengths and growing community to drive action. We examined SANE's history and legacy, our current activities and capabilities, and our future opportunities and challenges. We identified areas of unmet need and what SANE can do to meet those needs. Four key questions guided us:

1. **What are the biggest issues and greatest needs for people affected by complex mental health issues?**

2. **What are the challenges and opportunities for SANE and what are our unique strengths?**

3. **Where should SANE focus to have the biggest impact?**

4. **What action can SANE take towards our goals – whether by leading, partnering or advocating for change?**

Through this process, the vision of the society we wanted to see was clear, captured in three big-picture goals: to change mental health inequity through systemic change; eliminate stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion; and create equal employment and economic opportunity.

To work towards these goals and our vision, we developed a Strategic Plan for the first five years. The plan underlines the need for action and our desire to eliminate the inequalities that are too much a part of the lives of people with complex mental health issues.

For the greatest impact, our strategy intentionally works to frame and connect SANE's capabilities, programs, activities, and role in the mental health sector. It is a multi-level system reform approach, where we will grow our base with grassroots connections, working through digital excellence, partnering at the local level around Australia, and working as part of the system. We will be the catalyst to create connection, community, continuity and contribution for every person and family with complex mental health issues in Australia. And through listening to our community, we will enable a shared voice to advocate for the systemic and structural reform and investment in the early, comprehensive support that is needed.

To frame this direction, we have also developed a bold new visual identity to help SANE stand up and out – for the human rights, diversity, inclusion, and advocacy that our community deserves.

SANE's visual identity and narrative needed to be more community-facing to connect with people with complex mental health issues amongst a crowded sea of mental health brands. SANE is ready to break barriers, raise expectations, and represent the diversity of our community.

SANE's brand idea 'Break through complexity' frames this new narrative and an identity that consciously incorporates difference. 'Complex' does not fit neatly or conform, and SANE's identity is crafted around making space for difference. Letters grow and shrink out of place; shapes are disrupted, and colours are unapologetic – creating a fearless voice for change and a strong coherent presence across all moments. We want the new brand mark for SANE to make people stop and think, and hopefully consider whether as a society we need to learn to be more comfortable with difference, to push boundaries and make space for people with complex mental health issues.

And we are already well-begun.

The launch in 2022, of our transformed support community is already bridging the gaps. With an Australian-first model combining free counselling, peer support, groups and help to develop a personalised recovery plan though a co-designed online portal, SANE is putting people in the driving seat.

With this approach, we truly believe it is possible to change the course of life for people with emerging and enduring complex mental health issues and ensure a brighter future.

I'm incredibly proud of what has been produced in such a short time and grateful to all who contributed to and supported this work.

Thank you for being part of the SANE community.

Rachel Green
Chief Executive Officer
SANE

"The person I referred to SANE is over the moon and loves working with their SANE counsellor.

They've reported back that SANE is different to any support they've received before and that when they had to attend hospital, their stay was much shorter, and they felt confident heading home knowing that ongoing support from SANE was available."

Clinician referring to SANE

OUR VISION.

A brighter future for people affected by complex mental health issues by ending mental health inequity and social and economic exclusion.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT.

People living with complex mental health issues face stigma, discrimination, and a fragmented and unequal mental health system. Two recent inquiries – the Productivity Commission Mental Health Inquiry[1] and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System[2] – highlighted the social and economic impacts of mental ill-health on the Australian community. These reviews outlined a path forward for a better, more connected, and person-centred mental health system.

An estimated 880,000 Australians over 18 years of age are living with a complex mental illness in any year, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, major depressive disorder, severe anxiety, OCD, and PTSD, substance use disorders and eating disorders[3]. The estimated 205,000 autistic people[4] and 588,700 people with an intellectual disability[5] also face significant gaps in appropriate mental health support[6,7]. Around 1.4 million Australians, or 8.5 per cent of the adult population, experience two or more mental health conditions in any given year.[8]

Inaccessible treatment and support can lead to declining mental health, followed by preventable physical and mental distress, disruption in education and employment, relationship breakdowns, stigma, and loss of quality of life and opportunities.

Mental illness is costing Australia about $200 to $220 billion per year.[9] The rate of mental health presentations at Emergency Departments (EDs) has risen by about 70 per cent over the past 15 years, in part due to the lack of community-based alternatives to presenting in hospital in crisis or acute distress. Compared with people with other health conditions presenting at an ED, people with mental illness are nearly ten times more likely to arrive by police or correctional services vehicles[10].

Inequity of access to treatment and support means that people with complex mental health issues have poorer health outcomes compared to other Australians. There is an average 10- to 15-year mortality gap between people with severe mental illness and the general population. A meta review conducted in 2014 showed that those living with complex mental illness are between 10 and 45 times more likely to take their own lives than the general population.[11]

1.   Productivity Commission (2020) Inquiry Report: Mental Health
2.   State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, Parl. Paper No. 202, Session 2018-21
3.   https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/f7395726-55e6-4e0a-9c1c-01f3ab67c193/aihw-hse-228-in-brief.pdf.aspx?inline=true
4.   https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#autism-in-australia
5.   https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/intellectual-disability-australia/summary
6.   https://www.amaze.org.au/understand-autism/about-autism/mental-health/
7.   https://www.3dn.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Accessible-Mental-Health-Services-for-People-with-a-ID-A-Guide-for-Providers.pdf
8.   https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-survey-mental-health-and-wellbeing-summary-results/latest-release
9.   Productivity Commission op. cit.
10. ibid
11. Chesney E. Goodwin G.M. and S. Fazel. 2013. Risks of all-cause and suicide mortality in mental disorders: a meta review. World Psychiatry. June. 13(2): 153-60

OUR TEN—YEAR GOALS.

GOAL 01

End mental health inequity through systemic change

Inequitable access to treatment and support is a product of under investment in mental health and psychiatric care, when compared with physical health. The under-resourcing of mental health programs often prevents the most vulnerable people from overcoming adverse social and health determinants and early childhood experiences.[12] Chronic underinvestment in prevention and early intervention in mental health, also leads to lost opportunities for recovery, and many people live with mental ill-health for too long.[13]

Australia has a disproportionate focus on clinical services, overlooking other determinants of, and contributors to, mental health – including the important role played by family, kinship groups and carers, and providers of social support services.[14] Long waitlists for treatment, combined with the cost of clinical care means that mental health services are often inaccessible, or lack cultural safety. Some communities are also more at risk of experiencing complex mental health issues. For example, almost one-third of Indigenous adults have high or very high levels of psychological distress and are 2.7 times as likely as non-Indigenous adults to have these levels of psychological distress.[15] Other communities at risk include autistic people and those with intellectual disability, multicultural communities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and those living in regional, rural, and remote areas.

GOAL 02

Eliminate stigma, discrimination and social exclusion

People affected by complex mental health issues face ongoing stigma and discrimination. Despite some improvements in recent years in community understanding of mild to moderate mental health issues (particularly depression and anxiety), public awareness of complex mental health issues is poor.

Attitudes towards people with complex mental health issues are largely driven by lack of awareness, stigma, discrimination, and stereotypes. Fear and misunderstanding lead to discriminatory behaviour such as avoidance or exclusion as people seek to avoid associating with people with complex mental health issues. This can affect many aspects of people's lives, community connectedness, employment, hopelessness about the future, and suicidal ideation[16].

Many people with complex mental health issues feel disconnected from their local community and may not see themselves reflected in arts, culture, and the media. Nearly a quarter of people with psychotic illness reported feeling socially isolated and lonely. One in eight had no friends at all. A similar proportion had never known someone they could confide in.[17] One in six people with a mental health problem say newspaper portrayals of mental illness generally discourage them from seeking help.[18]

12. SANE Australia. Fact vs. myth: treatment & recovery
13. Productivity Commission op. cit.
14. ibid
15. Australian Medical Association (2018) Position Statement: Mental Health
16. Morgan, A.J. et. al (2021) Review of Australian initiatives to reduce stigma towards people with complex mental health illnesses: what exists and what works? International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 15(10).
17. SANE Australia. 2010. People living with Psychotic Illness: A SANE Response
18. SANE Australia. 2014. The SANE Guide to Reducing Stigma.

GOAL 03

Equal employment and economic opportunity

People with complex mental health issues continue to find it difficult to gain and maintain meaningful and fulfilling employment. They may face stigma and discrimination in the workplace, or they may work within organisations that do not have appropriate policies, protocols, and systems in place to provide them with support. For people living with a psychotic illness, the unemployment rate was estimated to be at 27 per cent, five times that of the general population in 2010[19]. In 2010, just over half (56 per cent) of people living with a psychotic illness who were employed had told their employer about their mental illness.[20] This compares to 35 per cent of 1,041 Australians surveyed in 2014 who indicated that they would not want their employers to know about their experiences of depression or anxiety.[21]

While there have been many gains in the last decade on creating mentally healthy workplaces, and an increase in recognition of depression, anxiety, and workplace stress – particularly through the global pandemic – these efforts and changes have not translated to greater inclusion and access for people with more complex mental health issues.

We believe this must change.

People with complex mental health issues can and do live well and are valuable members of the workforce and business and employers can do more to increase access to employment and economic opportunity.

19. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. National Survey of People Living with Psychotic Illness
20. ibid
21. TNS. 2014. State of Workplace Mental Health in Australia

STRATEGIC PLAN
JULY 2022 — JUNE 2027.

With a 20-year history of directly supporting our community, ending the inequity and social and economic exclusion faced by people with complex mental health issues and their families is the driving force behind SANE.

"This has been the first time in my whole life that I have been able to talk about this and not just feel heard but feel like there is hope".

SANE Guided Service Participant

Bridge the gaps between systems of support

Beginning in 2022, we are dramatically transforming and growing our services to provide increased access to the life-changing connection, community, continuity, and contribution that we know the people we support depend on. As a leader in digital mental health support services, SANE will build digital bridges between systems of care, focusing on grassroots regional and community engagement to be nationally known and locally connected. We will translate these insights into co-design, research, and innovation.

Build connection, grow diverse communities and demonstrate social inclusion

Lived experience is fundamental to SANE's history, legacy, work, and SANE programs. Our activities will build community and create pathways to recovery, volunteering, employment, and leadership opportunities. However, these benefits that SANE offers are not yet available to all who need them.

We will work harder to reach those most in need, and share stories, experiences and opportunities including through the arts and media by growing and evolving our arts-based programs in SANE Create and The Dax Centre. SANE will also advocate for inclusion of the needs of people with complex mental health issues in climate policies.

Break through the barriers of stigma and take action on discrimination

With decades of experience speaking out against stigma and discrimination, SANE will increase our deployment of our greatest asset: our leaders with lived experience. We will spearhead a shift in attitude and behaviour in the media, workplace, and community. We will call out discrimination and stigma when we see it, but we will also work to lead a generational change in Australia to shift the perception of complex mental health issues and see this behaviour change.

Drive diversity and inclusion for complex mental health as a workplace priority

People with complex mental health conditions are among the most socially and economically disadvantaged in society because of the stigma and discrimination they experience in addition to illness itself. These experiences may be individual or structural, with institutions and cultural norms perpetuating disadvantage. This can result in exclusion from employment and poverty. While many gains have been made on creating mentally healthy workplaces, these efforts have not translated to improvements in employment and economic inclusion for those with complex mental health issues. We will champion inclusion, work on solutions, and help grow the Australian mental health peer workforce.

OUTCOMES.

"This has been the first time in my whole life that I have been able to talk about this and not just feel heard but feel like there is hope."

In the next five years, the outcomes we aim to achieve are as follows:

- Lived experience is firmly and structurally kept at the core of all we do at SANE.

- Our digital and telephone support services are accessible, inclusive, effective, and financially sustainable, reaching those most in need and delivering outcomes to help address the inequity in Australia's fragmented mental health systems.

- SANE's digital platform produce new insights into mental health inequity and experiences of stigma and discrimination at a national and regional level.

- SANE is a household name and known as a trusted community of support offering connection, community, continuity, and contribution.

- SANE's community is welcoming and inclusive and grows in diversity and scale year-on-year.

- SANE is delivering evidence-based volunteer, education, awareness, and stigma reduction activities nationally.

- SANE is a national leader in connecting the arts and mental health, supporting emerging artists with mental health issues, and hosting exhibitions and arts programs to challenge stigma and contribute to the cultural change needed to end discrimination for people with complex mental health issues.

- SANE is leading and partnering with Australian employers to increase inclusion in the workplace for people with complex mental health issues.

STRATEGIC PLAN ON A PAGE JULY 2022 — JUNE 2027.

Our Vision

A brighter future for people affected by complex mental health issues by ending mental health inequity and social and economic exclusion.

For people living with complex mental health issues, trauma, autistic people or people with intellectual disability who seek better mental health outcomes and their families, we have three goals:

1. **End mental health inequity through systemic change**
2. **Eliminate stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion**
3. **Equal employment and economic opportunity**

Strategic Objectives

Bridge the gaps between systems of support

- Build the bridge.
- Deliver individual outcomes.
- Co-design, collaborate, research, and innovate through the Anne Deveson Research Collaborative.

Build connection, community, continuity and contribution

- Co-design a Lived Experience Framework and Portfolio.
- Build community, reaching those most in need including families, younger people, and those at risk of suicide.
- Grow and evolve our arts activities through SANE Create and The Dax Centre.
- Advocate for inclusion of the needs of people with complex mental health issues in climate policies.

Break through the barriers of stigma and discrimination

- Lived experience–led action on stigma.
- Improve and grow the diversity and representation of people with lived experience.

Drive diversity and inclusion of people with complex mental health issues as a workplace priority

- Champion workforce diversity and inclusion.
- Design and test initiatives to increase access to employment.
- Contribute to peer workforce growth, development, and integration.

Enablers for success

Workforce capability

Financial, governance and business model

Systems and technology

Data, quality and evaluation for impact

Reach, engagement, partnerships and advocacy

SAME SANE, BUT DIFFERENT.

SANE is the leading national organisation for people with complex mental health issues in Australia

Focusing on complex mental health issues.

SANE is unique in our focus on supporting people who experience complex mental health issues, trauma and supporting the mental health of those who are autistic and people with intellectual disability. We serve all people in Australia with complex mental health needs, their families, friends, and carers, as well as the community in Australia.

Digital mental health leadership.

SANE is a digital mental health leader. We are providers of technology to the wider mental health sector and leaders on the critical nexus of data, insight and lived experience-driven reform.

Building on SANE's reputation, history, and legacy.

SANE is widely respected as a lived experience-led organisation and advocate, with a long and proud history of collaboration across and beyond the mental health and suicide prevention sectors.

Raising community awareness, understanding and acceptance of complex mental health issues.

SANE reaches over one million people in Australia each year across all platforms – our reach into the community helps drive awareness and advocacy to support greater inclusion for people with complex mental health issues.

Elevating and connecting the voices of people with lived experience.

SANE's national community of supporters, volunteers and Peer Ambassadors are our greatest asset, and their lived experience leadership provides the foundation for SANE to contribute to stigma reduction efforts nationally.

Leading research and providing data to support policy, advocacy, and evidence-based decision-making.

With decades of first-hand knowledge and close ties to our community, SANE is a leader on designing and partnering to deliver innovation and research into complex mental issues.

The best kept secret in mental health.

SANE's peer support, counselling, forums, peer-led groups, blogs, art and social group programs, art exhibitions, education and information resources are highly valued by those who connect with us. Our joined up supports lead to long-term community membership through our online forums offering continuity for people over their lifetime.

"As Chair of SANE, I am thrilled to endorse this new vision and strategy for the future we want to create for all people and families facing the challenges of complex mental health. A brighter future is certainly possible – and it starts right here at SANE."

Lucy Myer, Chair SANE
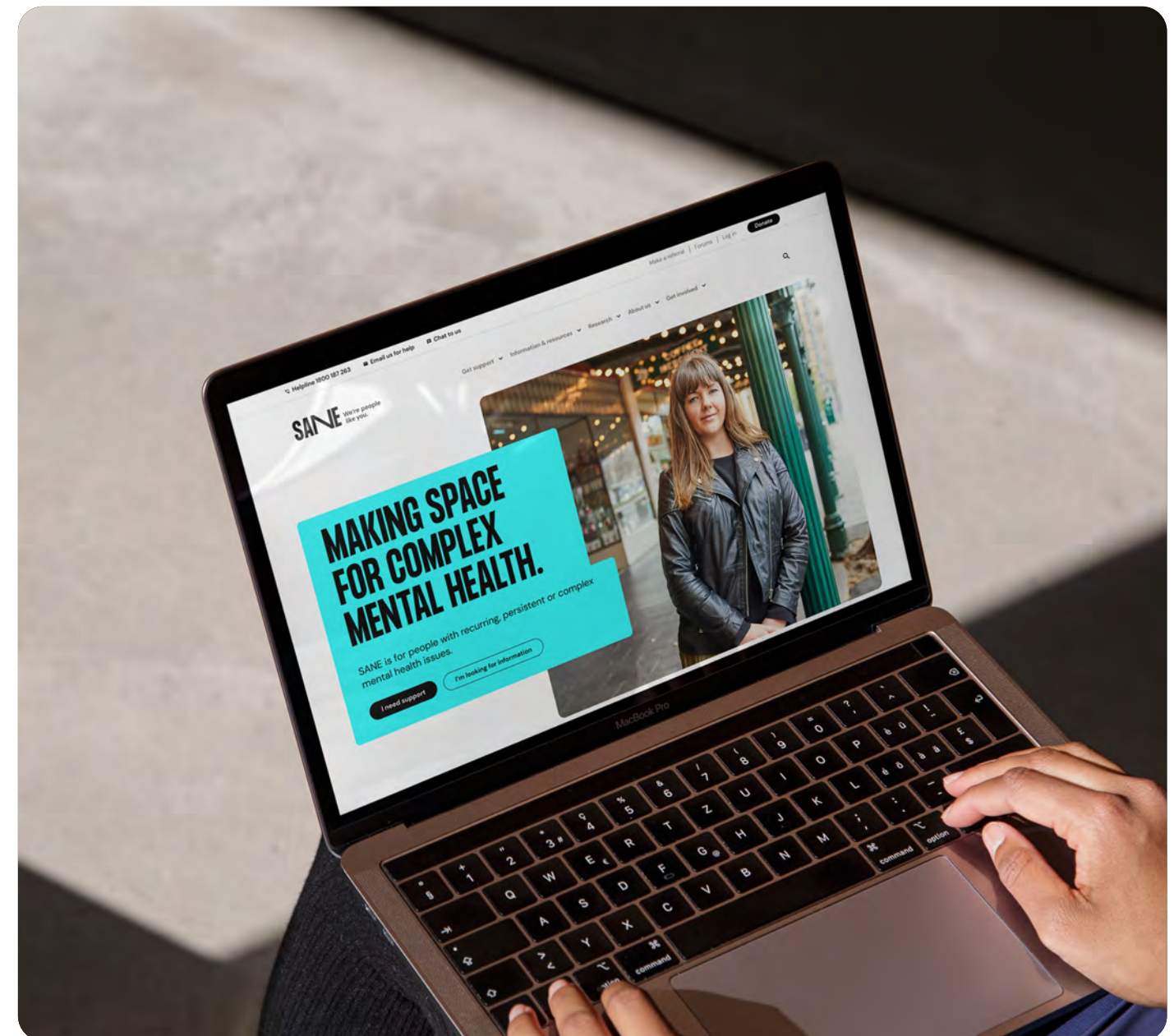
THANKS.

SANE We're people like you.