

# What Is a Psychiatric Report?

A psychiatric report is a written document prepared by a psychiatrist that summarises clinical findings, opinions, and recommendations for a specific purpose. This leaflet explains what psychiatric reports are, why they are requested, and what they can and cannot do.

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## Purpose of a Psychiatric Report

A psychiatric report may be requested to:

- Summarise assessment and treatment
- Provide a clinical opinion for another party
- Address specific questions related to functioning or capacity
- Assist with decision-making in medical, workplace, insurance, or legal contexts

Reports are prepared for **defined purposes**, not as general letters of support.

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## Common Situations Where Reports Are Requested

Psychiatric reports may be requested for:

- GPs or other treating health professionals
- Employers or workplace rehabilitation providers
- WorkCover or insurance claims
- Legal matters
- Government agencies

The content and scope of the report depend on **who requested it and why**.

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## What a Psychiatric Report Typically Includes

A report may include:

- Relevant background and history
- Summary of symptoms and diagnosis (where appropriate)
- Findings from assessment
- Current treatment and response
- Opinion on functioning or capacity
- Recommendations relevant to the referral question

Reports are based on **clinical assessment and available information**.

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## What a Psychiatric Report Is Not

A psychiatric report is not:

- A guarantee of outcomes
- A legal determination of liability
- An advocacy document
- A substitute for independent legal or occupational assessment

Reports provide **clinical opinion**, not decisions.

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## Treating Reports vs Independent Reports

### Treating Psychiatrist Reports

- Based on ongoing clinical care
- Focus on treatment and functioning
- Not independent assessments

### Independent or Medico-Legal Reports

- Conducted for assessment purposes
- Independent of treatment
- Time-limited and evaluative

A psychiatrist usually cannot act in both roles for the same matter.

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## Limits of Psychiatric Opinions

Psychiatric opinions:

- Are based on information available at the time
- May change as circumstances change
- Reflect professional judgement, not certainty

Reports do not predict the future with certainty.

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## Reports and Confidentiality

Reports are:

- Prepared with patient consent
- Shared only with the nominated recipient
- Subject to privacy and confidentiality obligations

Once released, control over further distribution may be limited.

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## Timeframes and Fees

Psychiatric reports:

- Require dedicated time to prepare
- Are often completed outside appointment time
- May attract additional fees

Timeframes vary depending on complexity and current workload.

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## Requesting a Psychiatric Report

When requesting a report, it is helpful to:

- Clarify the purpose of the report
- Identify specific questions to be addressed
- Allow sufficient time for preparation

Not all requests are clinically or ethically appropriate.

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## If You Are Unsure About a Report Request

If you are unsure:

- Why a report is being requested
- What it will include
- Whether it is appropriate

These questions should be discussed during an appointment.

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## Summary

A psychiatric report is a structured clinical document prepared for a specific purpose. Understanding its role and limitations helps set realistic expectations and supports appropriate use.

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