

The Hon. Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister of Australia
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

The Hon. Mike Baird MP
Premier of New South Wales
Parliament House Sydney NSW 2000

The Hon. Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria
Parliament House East Melbourne VIC 3002

The Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
Premier of Queensland
Parliament House Brisbane QLD 4000

The Hon. Colin Barnett MLA
Premier of Western Australia
Parliament House Perth WA 6837

The Hon. Jay Weatherill MP
Premier of South Australia
Parliament House Adelaide SA 5000

The Hon. Will Hodgman MP
Premier of Tasmania
Parliament House Tasmania TAS 7000

Andrew Barr MLA
Chief Minister
Australian Capital Territory
Legislative Assembly Canberra ACT 2601

The Hon. Adam Giles MLA
Chief Minister
Northern Territory
Parliament House Darwin NT 0800

16 July 2015

Dear First Ministers

We are writing to implore you, the leaders of the states and territories and the Commonwealth of Australia, to urgently work together to reform our nation's failing mental health system.

The most recent review of Australia's mental health system, conducted by Professor Allan Fels and the National Mental Health Commission (NMHC), described a deeply flawed system, characterised by:

Poor planning, coordination and operation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, resulting in duplication, overlap and gaps in services.



The NMHC posed the question:

If the Commonwealth and states can't be sure about their respective roles and responsibilities, then how is a person with mental health difficulties, or provider, expected to know where to go?

Only you, the First Ministers of our governments, can resolve this long-standing confusion and achieve lasting and effective reform.

We, the mental health sector, last wrote to First Ministers in December 2012 urging the adoption of national, whole-of-life, outcome-based targets and indicators to drive mental health reform. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) responded by announcing *“new governance and accountability arrangements that will directly engage stakeholders and ensure that governments are held to account.”*

At the same meeting, COAG committed to adopting *“whole-of-life and outcome-based national indicators and targets,”* and sought independent expert advice on the most appropriate indicators and targets.

COAG received that advice two years ago but has not acted. In the meantime, Australia's mental health crisis has deepened.

We write today with two clear priorities for action. While the challenge is daunting, we believe the immediate priorities are clear.

First, we ask governments to act on your commitments of 2012 by urgently implementing national, whole-of-life targets for improving mental health outcomes that reflect the aspirations of consumers and carers, backed up with indicators to demonstrate progress and performance.

Second, we ask your governments to urgently develop and agree on a fully funded National Mental Health Agreement which, at a minimum:

- includes specific responsibilities across portfolios including health, social and community services, employment and education
- boosts investment in early intervention and prevention
- expands and streamlines services in the community, close to need, and
- guarantees an acceptable standard of services to Australians who experience mental illness and their carers.

Upon releasing the NMHC review, Federal Health Minister the Hon Sussan Ley MP said that Australia needs a reform plan for mental health that is *“national”, “coordinated”* and *“binding”*.

We agree, but stress the need for a plan that reflects a whole-of-government approach to mental health. History demonstrates clearly that a national agreement developed by health ministers and health departments alone will fail to improve the whole-of-life outcomes that, as COAG has already acknowledged, are the true test of reform.



Only you, Australia's First Ministers, can ensure your whole cabinets, including your ministers for employment, education, defence, finance, social and community services, Indigenous affairs, health, and your Treasurers, all play their part in improving the mental health of an entire nation.

The economic and social benefits of whole-of-government action on mental health will be profound, but they can only be realised through your collective leadership.

We, the undersigned, stand ready to assist you in the reform that lays ahead.

Sincerely


**Mental Health
Australia**



Frank Quinlan, CEO
Mental Health Australia



Sue Murray, CEO
Suicide Prevention Australia



Jonathan Nicholas, CEO
ReachOut



Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO
Australian Council of Social
Services

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE



Helen Christensen, Executive
Director
Black Dog Institute

sane
AUSTRALIA



Jack Heath, CEO
SANE Australia

**neami
national**



Arthur Papkotsias, CEO
Neami National



David Meldrum, Executive Director
Mental Illness Fellowship
of Australia



Ian Hickie, Executive Director
Brain & Mind Research Institute





B Maher

Brendan Maher, General Manager
R U OK? LTD



Royal Flying Doctor Service

M Lavery

Martin Lavery, CEO
Royal Flying Doctor Service



Brett Goodridge

Brett Goodridge, Acting CEO
Lifeline



Kim Ryan

Adjunct Prof Kim Ryan, CEO
Australian College of Mental
Health Nurses



RACGP

Frank R Jones

Dr Frank R Jones, President
The Royal Australian College of
General Practitioners



APS Australian
Psychological
Society

Lyn Littlefield

Lyn Littlefield, CEO
Australian Psychological Society



RichmondFellowship
ACT Inc.

Wilf Rath

Wilfred Rath, CEO
Richmond Fellowship ACT



Jaelea Skehan

Jaelea Skehan, Director
Hunter Institute of Mental Health

Relationships Australia

Alison Brook

Alison Brook, CEO
Relationships Australia



Ara Cresswell

Ara Cresswell, CEO
Carers Australia



Joy Gillett

Joy Gillett, CEO
Australian Rotary Health

aftercare

John Malone

John Malone, Executive Director
Aftercare





Jenna Bateman, CEO
Mental Health Coordinating
Council



Jennifer Beveridge, CEO
Eating Disorders Victoria



Lyn Morgain, CEO
cohealth



Dr Cathy Kezelman AM, President
Adults Surviving Child Abuse



Kim Koop, CEO
Psychiatric Disability Services of
Victoria (VICSERV)



Sam Refshauge, CEO
Batyr Foundation



Betty Kitchener AM, CEO
Mental Health First Aid Australia



Chris Jones, CEO
Anglicare Tasmania



Jenny Smith, CEO
Council to Homeless Persons



Family Support Newcastle
your family, our community

Annette Tubnor, CEO
Family Support Newcastle



Marcelle Mogg, CEO
Catholic Social Services Australia



Butterfly
Foundation for Eating Disorders

Christine Morgan, CEO
Butterfly Foundation





Amara Bains, A/CEO
Queensland Alliance



Terri Smith, CEO
PANDA



Suzanne Greenwood, CEO
Catholic Health Australia



Rod Astbury, CEO
WA Association for Mental Health



Peter Ruzyla, CEO
EACH



George Tambassis, National
President
The Pharmacy Guild of Australia



Liz Crowther, CEO
MI Fellowship



Maria Brett, CEO
Psychotherapy and Counselling
Federation of Australia



Rob Ramjan AM, CEO
Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW



Vivienne Miller, Director
TheMHS Learning Network



Lyn English
NMHCCF Consumer Co-Chair

Elida Meadows
NMHCCF Carer Co-Chair



Glenys Wilkinson, CEO
Australian Association of
Social Workers





Chris Gibbs, CEO
Mental Health
Professionals Network



Joanne Toohey, Acting CEO
The Benevolent Society



Simon Viereck, Executive Officer
Mental Health Community Coalition
ACT



A proven program for mental wellbeing

Clare Guilfoyle, CEO
Grow



Trudy Hanson, Manager
National Association for Loss &
Grief (NSW) INC



Amberlee Laws, Campaign
Manager
Mentally Healthy WA



Ben Matthews, Chair
ACT Mental Health
Consumer Network



Mark Henley, CEO
Queensland Council of
Social Service



Kingsley Bedwell, CEO
Richmond Fellowship Queensland



Paul Senior, President
Mental Health Coalition of SA



Connie Digolis, CEO
Mental Health Council of Tasmania





Claire Hewat

Claire Hewat Adv APD, CEO
Dietitians Association of Australia



Vicki Russell

Vicki Russell, CEO
Nofasd Australia



C. Lees

Claire Lees, President
Arafmi Queensland INC



Kate Strohm, Director
Siblings Australia INC



Noel Muller

Noel Muller, President
Queensland Voice for Mental
Health INC



Joe Calleja

Joe Calleja, CEO
Richmond Wellbeing



David Beaver

David Beaver, Executive Director
Centacare Ballarat



John Mendoza

John Mendoza, Director
ConNetica



Michael Moore

Michael Moore, CEO
Public Health Association,
Australia



Gaenor Dixon

Gaenor Dixon, President
Speech Pathology Australia



Jennifer Bowers

Dr Jennifer Bowers, CEO
Australasian Centre for Rural and
Remote Mental Health



John Eyre

John Eyre, CEO
arbias LTD





Cathy O'Toole, CEO
Solas



MIFWA
mental illness
fellowship of WA

Monique Williamson, CEO
Mental Illness Fellowship WA INC



Natasha Miliotis, CEO
Mental Illness Fellowship SA INC



Hamza Vayani, National Project
Manager
Mental Health in Multicultural
Australia



Wendy Groot, CEO
Mental Health Carers Tasmania



Angela Ingram, CEO
Mental Health Foundation ACT



Helen Egan, CEO
TEAMhealth



Lorrain Davies, CEO
Mental Illness Fellowship of
Australia NT



Jeremy Audas, CEO
Mental Illness Fellowship of North
QLD INC



Tony Stevenson, CEO
Mental Illness Fellowship of
QLD INC



Alyson Miller, CEO
on the line



Sharon Sarah, CEO
Bridges





Damian Ferrie, CEO
Inner South Community Health



Jane Henty, Executive Officer
Mental Health Carers
ARAFMI Australia



Gerry Naughtin, CEO
Mind Australia



Sally Sinclair, CEO
National Employment Services
Association



Miriam Vandenberg, Co-Convenor
Social Determinants of Health
Advocacy Network (Tasmania)



Gordon Gregory, CEO
National Rural Health Alliance



Dr Peri O'Shea, CEO
Being



Alison Verhoeven, CEO
Australian Healthcare & Hospitals
Association



Janne McMahon, Chair and
Executive Officer
Private Mental Health Consumer
Carer Network (Australia)



Tony Holland, CEO
OzHelp Foundation



Kate Beaumont, President
National Welfare Rights Network



Debbie Childs, Executive Director
Mental Health Carers Arafmi (WA)

