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ERG Meeting – countdown to reform begins

Mental Health Australia today welcomed the first meeting of the Expert Reference Group (ERG) advising the Commonwealth Government on its response to the National Mental Health Commission's recent Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services.

"Today's ERG meeting is another important step towards the reform that is so urgently required. There have been many reviews; now we need action," Mental Health Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said.

"The ERG will be under considerable pressure to meet the Government's own timeframe, to implement substantial reforms from December 2015. Mental Health Australia is ready to work with the ERG to ensure they meet this important deadline.

"Our failing mental health system is already letting down too many vulnerable Australians in need of support. With so many current programs scheduled to end, or scheduled to be subsumed into the National Disability Insurance Scheme early next year, it is essential the ERG lays out a properly costed plan to provide the high quality services and programs of the future.

"The National Mental Health Commission's Review documented the failings of the current system, and outlined the direction future reform must take. What we need now is to implement that reform, working in tandem with consumers and carers and the mental health sector to overcome the problems that have been documented so clearly.

"As Federal Health Minister the Hon Sussan Ley MP indicated when the Commission's Review was released, we need a response that is "national", "coordinated" and "binding".

"The ERG has a unique opportunity to outline what needs to be done immediately, and to identify the longer term objectives of what is likely to be a decade-long process of reform.

"The ERG's response is only one piece of the current puzzle. The process that takes us towards finalising arrangements regarding a 5th National Mental Health Plan and the National Disability Insurance Scheme must engage the states and territories, consumers and carers and the broader mental health sector."

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