Mental Health Australia

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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. Annastacia 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 <u>First Ministers in December 2012</u> 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



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Sue Murray, CEO Suicide Prevention Australia



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Jonathan Nicholas, CEO ReachOut



Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO Australian Council of Social Services



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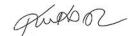
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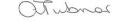
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Maria Brett, CEO



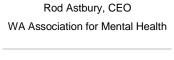
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Chris Gibbs, CEO

Mental Health

Professionals Network



A proven program for mental wellbeing



Clare Guilfoyle, CEO Grow



Ben Matthews, Chair ACT Mental Health Consumer Network



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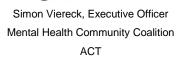




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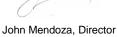
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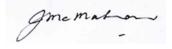
ARAFMI Australia





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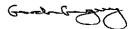
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