

16 April 2015 | For immediate release

“Coordinated, national, binding”

Mental Health Australia has welcomed the release of the National Mental Health Commission’s Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services and called for immediate action to address the litany of failings identified.

“This is no time for business as usual,” Mental Health Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said.

The Commission’s report highlights the systemic failure of current arrangements, noting:

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

“Vulnerable people left to navigate a complex and fragmented system.”

On the eve of the COAG meeting, Mental Health Australia has welcomed the Minister for Health, the Hon Sussan Ley MP’s proposal to act immediately on one of the report’s first recommendations:

“Develop, agree and implement a National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan with states and territories, in collaboration with people with lived experience, their families and support people.”

Minister Ley has proposed this by recommending the establishment of a COAG Working Group on Mental Health Reform and an Expert Reference Group.

“As First Ministers and responsible portfolio Ministers gather from across the country over the coming days, Australians will be looking for strong leadership on mental health,” Mr Quinlan said.

“Ministers should agree to carefully consider the Commission’s report, consult with stakeholders, consumers, carers and the mental health sector, and develop an agreement that is, to use Minister Ley’s words, “coordinated, national and binding”.

“Without clear commitment from all levels of government, this report will go the way of so many previous reports: a brief moment of hope followed by inaction and despair.

“Mental Health Australia stands ready to assist the reform process.

“The mental health sector has already undertaken significant work to prepare for this vital reform and we are ready for action. Now is our opportunity to work together to build the mental health system Australians deserve and expect.

“Only by working together, and listening to everyone, can we make a difference in the lives of people who live with mental illness and those who care for them.”

Media Contact: Peter O’Rourke – 0409 558 723

