

MEDIA RELEASE

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Website helps people with mental illness and their carers deal with insurance

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) and *beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative* will launch the Mental Health and Insurance Project (MHIP) website (www.mentalhealthandinsurance.org.au) today.

Australians with experience of mental illness often face difficulties in accessing insurance policies and/or making claims against insurance policies as a result of their mental illness and are often unaware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to insurance applications and claims.

The MHIP website has been developed in collaboration with representatives from the insurance and financial services sectors as a means of addressing information gaps and empowering consumers seeking insurance products.

The MHIP website contains information on mental illness and insurance, including the relationship between mental illness and specific insurance products, consumer legal rights and responsibilities, the disability legislative structure that governs the insurance industry and consumer avenues for complaints and appeals. The *Tell Your Story* portal allows visitors to share their experiences and assist advocacy efforts.

This website builds on the findings of the groundbreaking MHCA/*beyondblue* 2011 report, *Mental Health, Discrimination and Insurance: A survey of consumer experiences 2011*, which captured the experiences of Australians living with mental illness when accessing insurance products. Respondents reported a lack of awareness of their rights and responsibilities with insurance applications and claims. This one-stop online portal will improve knowledge and awareness of insurance practices for mental health consumers and their carers.

Ensuring fair and equitable access to insurance for Australians with mental illness is a key priority for the MHCA and *beyondblue*. This website will help Australians with mental illness access the information they need engage properly and fully within insurance applications and claims processes. This MHIP website is one way in which the mental health sector and the insurance and financial services industries can ensure that this information is made available to Australians with mental illness and their carers when and where they need it.

Representatives from the mental health and insurance and financial services sectors have been working collaboratively for over a decade to improve the experiences of Australians with mental illness and their carers in applying for and making claims against their insurance policies.

Website: www.mentalhealthandinsurance.org.au

Media Contacts:

beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative Julie Foster, Head of Communications:
0409433501 03 98106100

Mental Health Council of Australia Simon Tatz on 0402 613 745 or 02 62853100



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