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## Mental health awaits government action

Mental Health Australia has renewed its call for a decade of mental health reform, commencing immediately, following the release of the 2015 Federal Budget.

Welcoming the Abbott Government's re-commitment to the development of a new National Mental Health Plan, Mental Health Australia was also heartened by Minister Ley's previous commitment that the Plan would be "coordinated", "national" and "binding".

"If we are to fix our ailing mental health system, we need a long-term, systematic approach to reform that reaches beyond annual budgets, partisan politics and short-term electoral cycles," Mental Health Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said.

"Australians who rely on these services and programs have waited a long time for reform. For too long vulnerable people have been left to navigate a complex and fragmented system on their own.

"The National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services has outlined tangible steps which Australia can take right now to begin the process of reform."

The announced Investment Approach to Welfare will gather important data regarding the long term costs of unemployment and disengagement. Another announcement, the Youth Employment Strategy, is aimed at providing direct assistance through targeted employment programs for vulnerable young people who live with mental illness.

"People who live with mental illness are much more likely to experience unemployment, so both these initiatives are very welcome," Mr Quinlan said.

"However, we cannot allow another year to pass without securing the future of high quality services and programs that people with mental illness so dearly need. The time for action has come.

"We must do all we can in the months ahead to ensure we do not repeat the recent crisis in mental health program funding.

"The mental health sector is ready for real and substantial reform. Now is our opportunity to work together to build the mental health system Australians deserve and expect."

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