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Mental health system broken

Last night's 7:30 Report on the ABC has highlighted the nation's poor mental health system, resulting too often in people reaching crisis and taking their own lives.

Today, Mental Health Australia has renewed its call for a long-term program of systemic reform, starting with the release of the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services, and the addition of mental health as an agenda item for COAG.

"When the Federal Government made a commitment to review the mental health system, we celebrated the opportunity to finally address deficiencies in a system that fails many of the people it should be helping," Mental Health Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said today.

"As the 7:30 Report demonstrated so painfully, our current system is deeply flawed and the result is people finding themselves at crisis point, and too often, taking their own lives.

"Right now, we have an opportunity to change that. Right now, if governments across Australia can commit to working with consumers and carers, the community sector and with those providing services on the ground, we can fix this.

"It's not something we can do overnight. We need a ten-year commitment from all governments to fund and implement a careful reform process for all Australians. Reform that involves listening to those who know the system best.

"As a first step, governments can commit to putting this issue on the agenda for COAG. COAG must lead a reform process involving all governments, and must stay the course until reform is completed successfully. To inform this discussion, the Commonwealth must release the Review and work with the mental health sector to implement the changes that are needed."

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