

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull 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. Michael Gunner MLA  
Chief Minister  
Northern Territory  
Parliament House Darwin NT 0800

20 December 2016

Dear First Ministers

We write to draw your attention to the alarming gaps between previous commitments by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on mental health and the consultation draft for the *Fifth National Mental Health Plan* (the draft plan).

The Prime Minister captured the importance of mental health to the whole nation when he said:

*We have to recognise mental illness is a huge cost in every respect, whether you measure it in dollars or whether you measure it in human happiness. And all of us have a vested interest in the mental health of all Australians. It is part of the mental wealth of our nation – a critical concept.*

In 2012, when releasing *The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-2022*, COAG indicated “All Governments are committed to reducing stigma and discrimination in society; significantly reducing suicide rates; and ensuring that people affected by mental health issues and their families have access to appropriate services and supports, stable and safe homes, and are able to participate successfully in education and employment”. To honour that commitment, we urge you to revisit the scope of the draft plan to put in place necessary conditions for successful whole-of-government action on mental health.



Mental health stakeholders are united on the key features of a world leading mental health system that supports consumers and carers to live contributing lives. These elements have varyingly appeared and disappeared from government documents on mental health reform. Critically, they were at the heart of the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services, commissioned by the Coalition Government in 2014.

To achieve lasting reform, governments need to:

- Commit to meaningful improvements in the lives of consumers and carers. *Yet the draft plan is absent of whole-of-life targets and indicators, which in 2012 COAG committed to developing. This absolves governments of any accountability to implement reforms that will truly make a difference.*
- Assign specific Ministerial responsibilities across portfolios, including health, social and community services, employment and education. *Yet the draft plan is singularly focussed on health services and will only be considered and signed by Health Ministers.*
- Reorient investment towards early intervention and prevention. *Yet the draft plan is silent on how we can give consumers and carers the support they need in the community as early as possible.*
- Expand and embed services in the community, close to need. *The draft plan provides for integrated regional planning and service delivery, but only within existing expenditure. It makes no provision for growth in the community mental health sector, yet this is where future investment priorities must lie.*

It appears from the draft plan your governments intend to renege on past COAG commitments.

Early but consistent sector-wide feedback on the draft plan indicates it reflects old modes of thinking and does not reflect a changing world. It does not explain how governments will meet the aspirations that consumers, carers, service providers and other experts have put to government over many years. The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum has already described the draft plan as 'everything about us without us.'

A world leading mental health system can only be achieved by moving away from an agreement between Health Ministers to continue the status quo, to a whole-of-government and whole-of-community plan that embeds and integrates work across portfolios, empowers the community sector, and is accountable for consumer and carer outcomes.

It is not too late. As the draft plan is rewritten ahead of its presentation to Health Ministers in 2017, there is an opportunity for you, First Ministers, to lead mental health reform by fundamentally reconceptualising the Fifth Plan's vision in line with the principles above.

In so doing, you can reset the course towards a world leading mental health system in Australia. We stand ready to assist you in this important leadership role.



Sincerely

**Mental Health  
Australia**



Frank Quinlan CEO  
Mental Health Australia



Lyn English  
NMHCCF Consumer Co-Chair



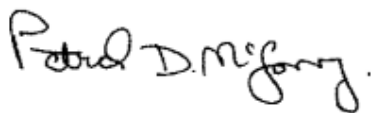
Elida Meadows  
NMHCCF Carer Co-Chair



Suicide Prevention  
Australia



Sue Murray CEO  
Suicide Prevention Australia



Professor Pat McGorry AO  
Executive Director Orygen

sane  
AUSTRALIA



Jack Heath CEO  
Sane Australia



Jonathan Nicholas CEO  
ReachOut Australia



Brendan Maher CEO  
R U OK?



Rebecca Reynolds Executive Director  
National LGBTI Health Alliance



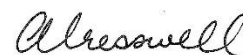
Professor Helen Christensen  
Chief Scientist and Director  
Black Dog Institute



Tony Stevenson  
National CEO  
Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia



Adj. Assoc. Prof Kim Ryan  
CEO Australian College of Mental Health  
Nurses



Ara Cresswell CEO  
Carers Australia





Arthur Papakotsias CEO  
Neami National



David Butt CEO  
National Rural Health Alliance



Dr Cassandra Goldie CEO  
Australian Council of Social Service



Elizabeth Crowther President  
Community Mental Health Australia



Kris Trott CEO  
Queensland Alliance for Mental Health



Connie Digolis CEO  
Mental Health Council of Tasmania



NORTHERN TERRITORY  
**MENTAL HEALTH  
COALITION**

Vanessa Harris  
Executive Officer  
NT Mental Health Coalition



Psychiatric Disability Services  
of Victoria (VICSERV)

Kim Koop CEO  
VICSERV



Rod Astbury CEO  
West Australian Association for Mental  
Health



Simon Viereck  
Executive Officer  
Mental Health Community Coalition ACT



Jenna Bateman CEO  
Mental Health Coordinating Council



Geoff Harris Executive Director  
Mental Health Coalition of  
South Australia





Private Mental Health  
Consumer Carer Network (Australia)  
engage, empower, enable choice in private mental health

Ms Janne McMahon OAM  
Chair & Executive Officer  
Private Mental Health Consumer Carer  
Network (Australia) Limited



Mental Health Carers  
Australia

Patrick Hardwick President  
Mental Health Carers Australia



**Grow**

A proven program for mental wellbeing

Leonie Young  
Chairperson Grow

**wellways**

Elizabeth Crowther CEO  
Wellways Australia Limited



Catholic Social  
Services **Australia**

Graham West Interim CEO  
Catholic Social Services Australia



**Speech  
Pathology  
Australia**

Gail Mulcair CEO  
Speech Pathology Australia



Royal Flying Doctor Service

Martin Lavery Federation CEO  
Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia



**RACGP**  
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Dr Bastian Seidel President  
RACGP



Occupational  
Therapy **Australia**

Rachel Norris CEO  
Occupational Therapy Australia



**APS** Australian  
Psychological  
Society

Professor Lyn Littlefield, OAM FAPS  
Executive Director  
Australian Psychological Society



SHARING  
THE  
JOURNEY

**Richmond  
Wellbeing**

Neil Guard CEO  
Richmond Wellbeing



**blue knot  
foundation**

empowering recovery from childhood trauma

Dr Cathy Kezelman AM President  
blue knot foundation







Ian Yates AM  
Chief Executive  
Cota Australia



Ross Joyce CEO  
Australian Federation of Disability  
Organisations



Bob Buckley  
A4 Convenor



Kasy Chambers Executive Director  
Anglicare Australia



Jennifer Bowers CEO  
Rural & Remote Mental Health



Debbie Childs CEO  
Helping Minds



Jaelea Skehan Director  
Hunter Institute of Mental Health



Dr Sebastian Cordoba  
Senior Manager Social Policy &  
Communications  
Australian Association of Social Workers



Dalane Drexler  
Executive Officer  
ACT Mental Health Consumer Network



Psychotherapy & Counselling  
Federation of Australia

Maria Brett CEO  
Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation  
of Australia



Claire Hewat CEO  
Dietitians Association of Australia

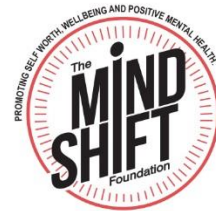




Stephen Jackson CEO  
Marathon Health



Alison Brook  
National Executive Officer  
Relationships Australia



Elizabeth Venzin CEO  
The MindShift Foundation



Vivienne Miller  
TheMHS Director  
TheMHS Learning Network Inc.



Dira Horne CEO  
Belconnen Community Service



Ian Carter AM CEO  
Anglicare WA



Alison Verhoeven Chief Executive  
Australian Healthcare and Hospitals  
Association



Suzanne Greenwood CEO  
Catholic Health Australia



Kyle Miers  
Chief Executive  
Deaf Australia

