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Mental health reform – we all know what needs to be done

Poor mental health costs the Australian economy some \$60 billion annually, and suicide deaths have increased by 43 per cent in the last ten years, with suicide deaths now accounting for more than double the national road toll.

In its pre-budget submission, the peak organisation for the mental health sector has detailed key areas of reform.

Urgently address gaps

“There are large gaps that are opening up as psychosocial support programs are transitioned to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) that must be addressed by the Government urgently,” says Frank Quinlan, CEO of Mental Health Australia.

“We hope that Commonwealth investment will be matched by States and Territories who also have an ongoing responsibility to ensure psychosocial supports are available for those 300,000 Australians who need them.”

Adopt the right national plan

“The Commonwealth has an important opportunity to take a national leadership role in mental health, working with the States and Territories to coordinate responses to entrenched problems. No tier of government can address mental health reform alone, but the Commonwealth has a key role to play in driving the reform agenda.”

“The *Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*, and other national agreements, must clarify in detail the respective responsibilities of different levels and parts of government for mental health, including responsibility for funding and/or delivering psychosocial support services for people with severe and complex mental illness who will not be eligible for the NDIS.

“The *Fifth Plan* should outline a growth strategy for the community mental health sector, and embed the role of the community and private mental health sectors in the Fifth Plan as genuine partners,” Mr Quinlan said.

Reorient and increase long term funding

“We need a long term investment plan to ensure services and programs match need, and we especially need to invest more in early intervention, prevention, online and community based services,” said Mr Quinlan. “Such investment should include greater spending on mental health and suicide prevention research to find the solutions of the future, and on suicide clusters.”



Empower consumers and carers

“Consumers and carers are the experts in what services and programs work for them, so meaningful involvement of people with lived experience should be at the heart of policy development, implementation and evaluation, service design, delivery and evaluation.”

Mental Health Australia’s Pre-Budget submission outlines specific solutions to support growing community need in mental health. It can be found at:
<https://mhaustralia.org/submission/2017-mental-health-australia-pre-budget-submission>

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