

Launch of #StigmaPledge campaign aims to reduce mental health stigma during the upcoming election period

(Please cascade to all appropriate staff)

SANE Australia and **Everymind** are pleased to announce the launch of our #StigmaPledge campaign on Thursday 4 April, 2019 in Canberra. We will be encouraging all Members of Parliament, candidates and political journalists to agree to sign the #StigmaPledge and uphold a standard of speech that adheres to the [Mindframe guidelines](#).

We are increasingly concerned about the use of unsafe language, myths, stereotypes and stigmatising language in political discourse. With the federal election fast approaching, we want to emphasise the importance of avoiding language that stigmatises mental health issues.

As the mental health and suicide prevention sector is aware, negative and unsafe references to descriptive phrases such as 'political suicide', 'suicide economy', 'crazy decision', 'political madness' and 'psychotic pollies', among others, can have a harmful effect on those living with mental health conditions. They can also inadvertently prevent people from seeking help and support.

SANE and **Everymind** are encouraging political leaders, candidates and journalists to be mindful of the power of their words, in order to reduce stigma and minimise harm to the most vulnerable members of our community.

This joint organisation approach encourages Members of Parliament, candidates and political journalists to lead by example, by pledging to avoid language that stigmatises mental health conditions during the election period and beyond.

As you may be aware, SANE and **Everymind** have been working together to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues since 2002. **Everymind's** *Mindframe* program supports safe media reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide, mental ill-health, alcohol and other drugs.

Mindframe's work and guidelines inform the SANE StigmaWatch initiative, which ensures media outlets report on mental health issues and suicide safely and accurately in order to reduce stigma, improve community awareness and minimise harm.

What is the #StigmaPledge?

The #StigmaPledge is a public commitment to using, reflecting and displaying a standard of speech that adheres to the *Mindframe* guidelines; avoiding the use of stereotypes, myths and stigma associated with mental ill-health and suicide.

By making this pledge, politicians will;

- 'Say No to Stigma' - in all its forms, and call out stigmatising language wherever it is used
- Speak in a way that honours the experiences of Australians affected by suicide and mental health issues.

By signing the #StigmaPledge, our leaders agree to improve the representation of mental health issues when engaging with the public, speaking with media, and discussing political issues. They will choose words that reflect fairness, inclusivity and respect.

Why is the #StigmaPledge campaign important?

For some Australians living with mental health conditions the impact of unsafe, negative, stereotypical and stigmatising language can be just as distressing as the symptoms of their illness.

Use of stigmatising language can exacerbate negative attitudes and self-stigma, which prevents people from reaching out for help and support when they need it most.

It is important that those in the public eye lead by example during the upcoming election and beyond, by pledging to avoid language that stigmatises mental ill-health during the campaign.

Examples of stigmatising language in politics

The campaign will focus on educating people about the need to avoid negative descriptions and stereotypes in political discourse.

Key messages include:

- Avoid referring to *any* individual as ‘psycho’, ‘crazy’, ‘mad’ or ‘deranged.’
- Understand the impact of using negative and unsafe references to behaviour, such as ‘crazy decision’, ‘political madness’ or ‘political suicide’.

How can you support the #StigmaPledge campaign?

Check your own word choices! Not just when discussing mental health publicly, but within your workplace too.

Other ways to support the campaign:

- **Attend the launch:** Former NSW Liberal Leader, John Brogden AM, Dr Michelle Blanchard, Acting CEO of SANE Australia and Marc Bryant, Acting Director of **Everymind** will officially launch the #StigmaPledge campaign in Courtyards J & K of Parliament House (on the House of Representatives side) at 11am on Thursday, April 4 2019. You are more than welcome to join us!
- **Sign the pledge:** You too can sign the #StigmaPledge and show your support for the campaign by [following the three easy steps outlined on the website](#). Here are some examples of social media posts you can share online:
 - o *I stand with @SANEAustralia @EverymindAU & @MindframeMedia in calling for #AusPol representatives to sign the #StigmaPledge promising to use safe & stigma-free language in the #AusFederalElection*
 - o *We support @SANEAustralia @EverymindAU & @MindframeMedia #StigmaWatch in calling for this #AusFederalElection to be stigma-free & for #AusPol representatives to sign the #StigmaPledge*
<https://bit.ly/2I7jLDI>

Find out more: Visit SANE Australia's StigmaWatch page to report any media items that use stigmatising language in reference to mental health issues and suicide.

www.sane.org/stigmawatch

You can visit the *Mindframe* website for information on the evidence-based Mindframe guidelines here:

www.mindframe.org.au

If you haven't already, your organisation can sign the [Communications Charter](#) via *Life in Mind*. This document is designed to guide the way organisations' discuss mental health and suicide prevention with each other and with the community.

Contact information

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