



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Mental Health needs Aged Care / Diabetes style plan

Mental health needs the same type of investment and reform as the Federal Government has promised to deliver for aged care and for people with diabetes.

The Federal Government today announced a massive \$700 million plan for aged care which aims to reform a fragmented system. The Government has promised to address a system which hampers consumer and carer access to services and to provide better care so that people don't end up inappropriately in public hospitals.

David Crosbie, CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) said that if governments are interested in freeing up hospital bed block, then mental health should be the priority. He pointed to the following facts:

- There were over 6 million hospital bed days for people with a mental health disorder in 2008.
- Over 40% of people currently in hospital mental health beds would not be there if appropriate community options were available.
- There are over half a million presentations of people with mental health problems to hospital Emergency Departments and specialist psychiatric units in 2006.
- Less than a third of these presentations result in admission – most are turned away with little or no treatment.
- For those lucky enough to gain a hospital mental health bed, one in seven is likely to be readmitted within 28 days.
- States and Territories have halved the number of community based mental health treatment beds over the last 15 years.
- In the last 50 years States and Territories have reduced the number of acute inpatient mental health beds from 30,000 to less than 7,000. While closing the bedlam asylums may have been a step forward, leaving people languishing with very limited community based options has been a disaster.

The failure to invest in community treatment options and preventative programs is the primary reason hospitals are struggling to cope in this area.

The MHCA has already called on the Government to increase flexibility and deliver a range of support programs to increase the health and well being of mental health consumers and carers.

The Government has taken a strong lead in hospitals, diabetes and now aged care - the next step must be to deliver a similar reform plan for mental health.

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