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MEDIA RELEASE

Billions needed to fix Australia's mental health system

The Federal Government needs to inject billions of dollars into mental health and introduce a suite of reforms to governance and administration if its promise of making mental health reform a major second term agenda is to be fulfilled.

Today Professor Pat McGorry, former Australian of the Year, outlined a blueprint for reform costing at \$3.5 billion over 4 years to "transform the way mental ill-health is responded to in this country". The Australian Medical Association (AMA) has called on the Government to provide \$5 billion to properly support people with mental illness.

The Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) cannot see how the Government can reform the mental health system without a massive investment in new money and new programs.

The MHCA believes this investment should be funded by both the Commonwealth and the states and territories.

The Minister for Mental Health, Mark Butler, recently travelled around Australia with the MHCA and heard directly from mental health consumers and carers about what is needed to 'fix the system', which is chronically underfunded, under-resourced and lacking a long-term workforce plan.

The MHCA calls on the Government to invest in new practices that will ensure employment, housing and social inclusion are part of coordinated health care services for people with severe and persisting mental illness.

Along with greater investment in early intervention services and services for young people, the MHCA also urges the Government to deliver properly funded mental health services for CALD and Indigenous Australians.

The need for a mental health consumer peak body, and a carer counterpart is also an essential component of any genuine reform process, along with measures to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with mental illness and their carers.

This Government has said it is committed to delivering mental health reform and ensuring all Australians have access to affordable and appropriate mental health care. This commitment must be met with the appropriate investment and funding in new services that is desperately needed.

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