



19 August 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

COAG briefed on mental health reform agenda

The Prime Minister and state and territory Premiers and Chief Ministers were today given a briefing by senior mental health experts Frank Quinlan, Patrick McGorry and David Cappel on the leadership challenges in mental health facing all Australian governments.

The three experts urged Australian governments gathered at COAG to endorse the principle that Australians should have the same access to quality care for mental ill-health as for any other ill-health and to commit to making substantial progress towards this goal as part of a National Partnership in mental health reform.

“Poor access to coordinated, quality care is a solvable problem that leads to increased social exclusion of Australians with severe and persistent mental illness,” the experts said.

“State and territory governments must immediately protect and grow funding for community mental health services. Leaders must commit all portfolios within their governments to a 10-year reform roadmap, with a clearly defined role for the new national Mental Health Commission and significantly invest in research, innovation and training hubs to help power the next wave of reform.

“Governments also need to create new training programs for an expanded and more specialised future mental health workforce.”

They outlined the measures needed to achieve this goal, including:

- * Putting Consumer and Carer engagement at the heart of the design and implementation of mental health services and programs
- * Reducing the impact of mental illnesses through prevention and early intervention
- * Promoting social inclusion for people with severe and persistent mental illness
- * Building an accountable, high skills system

The Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers heard that there are achievable ways to improve mental health care for all Australians, which will result in major preventable health, social and economic cost benefits. These include:

- * A mental health system that responds across the whole life course
- * National youth mental health network for Australians aged 12-25
- * Expansion of family & school-based interventions for Australians aged 0-12
- * Joint funding for new EPPIC services

COAG was advised that the way to achieve lasting mental health reform was by agreeing to a 10 year road-map to ensure Australians have the same access to quality care for mental ill-health as for any other ill-health and to build a national mechanism for accountability through the National Mental Health Commission.

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