

Mental health organisations join forces to create a better deal on mental health

Key date: 22 November 2012

More than ninety mental health and social services organisations have joined forces to review the way services are provided to people affected by mental illness in Australia, following their first ever Council of Non-Government Organisations (CONGO) on Mental Health meeting in Canberra.

The gathering committed to establishing a national vision for Australia to lead the world in mental health by 2022, so that within 10 years Australia is acknowledged internationally as the world leader in mental health services, programs, and outcomes.

"In many ways, Australia is already a world-leader in mental health" says Frank Quinlan, CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia, which co-hosted the historic meeting along with the National Mental Health Commission. "However when we brought together a diverse range of organisations and opened up discussion it became very clear that Australia's mental health system is still in trouble" he said.

According to the alliance's first Communique released today, the significant government investment in recent years is at risk of faltering as a result of red tape, lack of coordination and an entrenched culture of funding in silos across services.

"Suicide rates remain relatively high, workforce participation isn't improving and there's a long slide into poverty for many people affected by mental illness." Evidence, Quinlan says, that the various parts of Australia's mental health system are not working together effectively.

"We realised what's lacking is leadership, and that we need to be proactive and take solutions to government."



Mental Health Council of Australia

With the new National Mental Health Commission due to release its first National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention early next week, members of the CONGO believe they are well placed to review their own services and to lobby governments with a renewed mental health agenda in 2013, including through COAG.

"It's vital that we demonstrate to government how to place people with lived experience at the forefront of policy formulation, service design and evaluation in order to drive real improvements in the lives of people affected by mental illness and those who care for them."

Copies of the Communique and CONGO Meeting Report are available at www.mhca.org.au

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact: Mr Frank Quinlan, CEO, Mental Health Council of Australia (0409 655 460)

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