

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JOINT STATEMENT

Leading mental health groups welcome national reform commitments, urge ongoing coordinated action

Sydney, NSW – Leading mental health groups welcome the recent commitments at the Health and Mental Health Ministers’ meeting as a crucial step forward for mental health reform in Australia.

The NSW Mental Health Alliance commends the nation’s state and federal Health and Mental Health Ministers for meeting and aligning on a number of the sector’s key recommendations, while emphasising that continued, coordinated action is crucial to ensure these reforms make a real difference in the lives of Australians.

We commend the following outcomes:

- **Commitment to progressing the National Health Reform Agreement Addendum (NHRA) negotiations** alongside disability reform. We look forward to ongoing collaboration to support government to finalise the agreement as soon as possible, with the NHRA Addendum to commence from 1 July 2025.
- **Reaffirmed commitment to deliver the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement.** We expect governments to work in partnership to improve ongoing coordination of care across the mental health sector.
- **Twice-yearly meeting schedule to improve access to mental health services** across Australia. We commend the Health and Mental Health Ministers for committing to meet and to include lived and living experience in these discussions as well as in the design and implementation of mental health and suicide prevention initiatives.
- **Commitment to develop a plan for future psychosocial support arrangements** following the public release of the *Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial supports outside of the National Disability Insurance Scheme*.
- **Undertake national data project to inform how to grow and retain the mental health and suicide prevention workforce.** This is of particular importance to NSW as the state is experiencing a crisis in its mental health workforce and both short and long term strategies are needed to build and diversify the workforce.
- **National framework to improve interjurisdictional information sharing.** We welcome the commitment to develop a new national framework for the mutual recognition of mental health orders and improve access to care across state and territory borders.

While these commitments mark significant progress, the journey towards a robust mental health system demands timely and coordinated action from all levels of government to meet the demands of current and future populations.

The *Analysis of unmet need for psychosocial support* report reveals 493,600 people aged 12–64 years with a “severe or moderate mental illness” did not receive psychosocial support in the last year¹.

¹ <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/analysis-of-unmet-need-for-psychosocial-supports-outside-of-the-national-disability-insurance-scheme-final-report?language=en>

With the groundwork now set, creating and maintaining momentum for these reforms will now be crucial. Specifically, as part of the ongoing discussions and agreement negotiations it is essential that the amount of funding allocated to mental health care is commensurate with the burden of disease.

The Productivity Commission's landmark review into Mental Health has previously indicated an additional investment of \$2.4 billion was needed to fill gaps in mental health care². While the government's recent announcements are promising, they must be accompanied by this level of financial commitment to ensure reforms translate into meaningful improvements in the mental health system.

Quotes from NSW Mental Health Alliance members:

- “We commend the NSW Minister for Mental Health Rose Jackson and her federal counterpart Emma McBride for having the courage to commit to tackling these issues. The flawed mental health system we have now is the product of many years and the challenge of change can seem daunting. But the families and carers of people who experience mental health concerns need effective assistance for themselves and the people they care about, right now. That means committing to building a system that can deal with these issues safely and reliably deliver effective care. That in turn means an ongoing commitment to both collaborating to plan mental health services, and also planning to collaborate in effective and efficient support across state and federally funded services. The minister's commitment to ongoing meetings and inclusion of related areas for reform, (like the NDIS), give us an opportunity to start to achieve just that, informed by lived experience.” – **Jonathan Harms, CEO, Mental Health Carers NSW.**
- “The commitments made at the Health and Mental Health Ministers' meeting are a step forward for the mental health sector. The challenge now lies in ensuring these commitments translate into decisive action and investment to address the critical gap in mental health supports for people with mental health challenges and psychosocial disability. We need to keep building momentum, to continue collaborating with people with lived or living experience, and strive for real, lasting improvements for those who need it most.” – **Dr Evelyne Tadros, Chief Executive Officer of Mental Health Coordinating Council**
- “People with lived experience of mental health challenges are feeling increasingly dismayed that the mental health system lacks investment, innovation, and significant reform. We expect all Mental Health Ministers around the country to cooperate by sharing high-level data, ideas, and funding to improve our services. The commitments made last Friday are a great start and we are pleased these meetings will continue. Now we want to see real action.” – **Priscilla Brice, Chief Executive Officer of BEING Mental Health Consumers**
- “There are record numbers of Australian's experiencing mental health problems at the moment, yet they are entering a mental health care system that is under enormous strain. Anyone who has tried to access help, either for themselves or a relative, knows that we have a fragmented and underfunded mental health care system. As a clinician it is hugely encouraging to see our federal, state and territory governments committing to work together to improve mental health care across our country. Mental ill health is one of the most important health challenges our society faces. Now is the time for our leaders, at all levels of government, to step up and find solutions.” – **Prof. Sam Harvey, Executive Director and Chief Scientist of Black Dog Institute**
- “The commitments from the Health and Mental Health Ministers' Meeting are a positive start, and we now look forward to seeing meaningful action from governments to fix our broken mental health system. This must include consulting those with lived experience of mental illness and engaging with the mental health workforce to ensure that our system is both effective and

² Productivity Commission 2020, Mental Health, Report no. 95, Canberra
<https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report/mental-health.pdf>

therapeutic for those who need it. Right now, too many Australians are slipping through the cracks of an underfunded, understaffed, and fragmented system. It's critical that state and Federal governments continue to collaborate so mental health care is accessible, timely, and affordable for everyone, particularly those with complex and severe mental illnesses who are most at risk of missing out." – **Dr Pramudie Gunaratne, Chair of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists NSW Branch**

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About the NSW Mental Health Alliance

The NSW Mental Health Alliance is a coalition of leading mental health organisations in NSW, representing mental health consumers, carers, clinicians, community mental health services and researchers.

Joint Statement endorsed by:

- Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
- BEING Mental Health Consumers
- Black Dog Institute
- Mental Health Carers NSW
- Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC)
- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP)

Spokespeople available for interview:

- Jonathan Harms, CEO Mental Health Carers NSW
- Professor Samuel Harvey, Executive Director, Black Dog Institute
- Priscilla Brice, CEO, BEING Mental Health Consumers
- Dr Evelyne Tadros, CEO, Mental Health Coordinating Council
- Dr Pramudie Gunaratne, Chair RANZCP NSW
- Sharon Grocott, CEO, Wayahead Mental Health Association NSW
- Zena Burgess APS CEO if needed

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