



MEDIA RELEASE

Queensland leads the way on mental health stigma

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Over a year ago the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission identified the need for a national anti-stigma campaign focusing on mental health. It was one of twelve recommendations made in relation to mental health, a recommendation supported by the Federal government. Today, a State government has taken a real step towards implementing this recommendation, at least in Queensland.

In welcoming today's announcement of an \$8.5 million commitment to the new campaign, Mr David Crosbie, CEO of the Mental Health Council of Australia said; *'the Queensland government is to be commended for taking this important step to reduce the level of discrimination experienced by people with a mental illness and their carers. We know that discrimination is one of the reasons people do not get the help they need or the support services that could make a real difference in their lives.'*

Mr Crosbie pointed out that Australia has one of the lowest levels of workforce participation in the OECD for people with a mental illness. He linked this poor performance to stigma amongst employers and the community.

'Many people in our community have a kind of extreme stereotype of how people with a mental illness behave. These negative stereotypes lead to people with a mental illness experiencing difficulty obtaining and maintaining housing, employment, recreational opportunities, and relationships. At the very least anti-stigma campaigns can show people with a mental illness in a more realistic and positive way.'

Many countries around the world have implemented anti-stigma campaigns often with real impact on community attitudes to people with a mental illness.

Mr Crosbie said; *'it is important we all recognise that how we react to someone with a mental illness plays a key role in the degree to which they are able to recover and play a valuable role in our community. These campaigns are about changing our reactions to enable people with a mental illness to be able to live their lives just like you and me.'*

Media Contact: Simon Tatz on 0402 613 745 or 02 6285 3100