

MEDIA RELEASE

Mental Health Day 2010 – a new consensus for mental health in Australia?

For 10 October 2010

10 October is World Mental Health Day. This year, unlike previous years, we have seen the emergence of a new consensus from the Federal Parliament in its support for mental health reform across Australia. For the very first time, Australia now has a Commonwealth Minister for Mental Health (Mark Butler), a Shadow Minister for Mental Health (Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells) and a Greens spokesperson (Senator Rachel Siewert).

At the Mental Health Council of Australia's World Mental Health Day Forum held at the National Press Club in Canberra on 7 October, all three major parties agreed the current failures in our mental health system are unacceptable. Importantly, all three political parties acknowledged mental health is a priority area and funding must be increased, especially in community care and early intervention.

"World Mental Health Day is a time to focus on what we have achieved and hope to achieve in mental health. This year, 2010, may well go down as a key turning point in the reform process," said David Crosbie, CEO of the Mental Health Council.

"While the political rhetoric is increasingly supportive, mental health consumers and carers have heard most of these statements before. They have participated in numerous reports and inquiries that have made endless recommendations. They are rightly fed up with expressions of good will and promises to consider future options.

"But unlike previous times when mental health has managed to gasp a moment of political oxygen, today there is a glimmer of hope that we are witnessing a new era of political will and bi-partisan commitment to improving the way mental health services are delivered across Australia.

"World Mental Health day is on 10 October each year, however for the many Australians living with mental health problems, their carers, families and loved ones, Mental Health Day happens 365 days a year. Too many Australians have to deal with inaccessible and inappropriate mental health treatment options based largely on crisis management.

"With the personal commitment of the Prime Minister, a new Minister for Mental Health and all major parties talking about the need for increased investment in mental health, 2010 must be the year in which mental health reform ends some of the systemic discrimination against people who experience a mental illness." Mr Crosbie said.

The Mental Health Council of Australia asks all Australians to take time to do something you enjoy to celebrate World Mental Health Day, check on the mental health of someone you care about, and not be afraid to put their mental health and well being higher on their own agenda. Fundamentally we want all Australians to be active about mental health, not just on 10 October, but on every day of the year.

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The Mental Health Council of Australia is the independent, national representative body of the mental health sector in Australia.
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