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MEDIA RELEASE

Mental Health Victoria welcomes Canberra's bold commitment on mental health

Mental Health Victoria has welcomed the Federal Government's commitment to delivering the world's best mental health system for Australia in its Long Term National Health Plan announced yesterday by Health Minister Greg Hunt.

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said the Morrison Government's pledge to rate mental health equally alongside physical health has long been urged by consumers, carers and mental health services to transform a system that is fragmented, complex and incomplete.

Mr Clelland said the peak body was particularly pleased with the commitments in the Plan to develop a Children's Mental Health Strategy and for the widespread roll-out of adult mental centres to tackle the 'missing middle' in mental health services.

"Almost four million Australians suffer from some form of mental illness each year and 50 per cent of us will face a mental health challenge in our lives," he said. "Yet, sadly, mental health has often been viewed as the poor cousin of the health system."

Ensuring mental health is afforded the same attention and resources as physical health, however, will require a major shift in attitudes, skills, training and resources, and cooperation between Federal, State and Territory Governments.

"We urge all parties to get on board with the Morrison Government and work collaboratively towards a new National Mental Health Partnership."

Mr Clelland said a bigger focus is needed on children and young people, given that 50 per cent of mental health conditions present by the age of 14 years and 75 per cent by the age of 24.

“Prevention, early identification and age appropriate interventions are needed to lessen the lifeline impact of mental illness and ensure that young Australians can have happy and fulfilling lives,” he said.

Mental Health Victoria and its partner organisation, Australians for Mental Health, also have long advocated for adult mental health centres as an important means of bridging the gap between GPs and the hospital system.

It is expected that these centres will provide accessible team-based services that address the social, medical and economic aspects of mental ill-health in the community.

“This important commitment will provide much needed support for thousands of Australians and help prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and re-admissions.” Mr Clelland said. “They will save lives.”

The Federal Government's commitment to conduct a new National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing is also welcome.

“It has been 12 years since the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted the last survey and we are starved for current data on changes in prevalence rates, service access, and whether services are assisting people with recovery,” Mr Clelland said.

The leadership of the Morrison Government and the intersection of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into mental health and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System provide hope that Australia can plan and deliver the integrated and comprehensive mental health system that Australians need.

“After many years of neglect, we can now be optimistic about the future of mental health,” Mr Clelland said.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call Marie McInerney on 0418 273 698.