



Media Release

23 November 2015

People with mental illness will continue to fall through the gaps

VICSERV, the peak body representing community mental health providers in Victoria welcomes the release, by the Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley on 20 November, of the *Review of New Arrangements for the delivery of Mental Health Community Support Services and Drug Treatment Services*.

“The review highlights what consumers, carers and providers have observed first hand - that the new community mental health support service arrangements are failing to meet the needs of many people with serious mental illness, their families and carers” says Ms Kim Koop, VICSERV CEO.

The report notes a 19 per cent drop in client numbers; barriers to accessing services; a break down in local area partnerships and a silo-ed service system as the defining issues of the recommissioned MHCSS arrangements.

VICSERV is concerned that the report offers no solutions to many of the mental health sector issues, other than incremental improvement over the short term, and primarily provides recommendations for future arrangements for drug treatment services, which are much needed. The report refers to the implementation of the NDIS as a key factor in considering how to mitigate or resolve issues in the MHCSS. VICSERV believes these issues will increase, with significant impact on people, families and communities when the NDIS is implemented, starting from July next year.

VICSERV has been calling on the State Government to recognise and respond to the significant issues that will arise when MHCSS funding is transferred to NDIS.

“We believe that significant numbers of people living with mental illness will not be eligible for the NDIS. Furthermore, people who are eligible will not receive, under the NDIS, the psychosocial rehabilitation provided by the Victorian community managed mental health support system that is an essential component of their recovery.”

VICSERV remains concerned that, while the Government has provided assurance of safeguards for people in the transition process, we have no indications of what the next iteration of the state funded mental health support system will be. Addressing this is a matter of urgency.

“The sector is waiting on the Government’s 10 year mental health strategy. Up to now there has been little indication as to what this will look like. We hope that this report is the first step towards the current government standing up and taking responsibility for ensuring better outcomes for Victoria’s mental health service system.” Ms Koop concludes.

To avoid further unintended consequences, VICSERV is calling on the Department of Health and Human Services to convene a meeting with MHCSS providers and the broader community mental health sector to discuss the findings of the Apex Report and the next steps for mental health services in this State.

For media enquiries please contact Monique van Wierst on (03) 9519 7103.