



THE HON SUSSAN LEY MP

Minister for Health
Minister for Sport

MEDIA RELEASE

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Abbott Government working with mental health sector to action reform

The Abbott Government is working hand-in-hand with the mental health sector to take the National Mental Health Commission's landmark review from paper to policy, with the first meeting of an expert reference group tasked with guiding the implementation of its recommendations today.

Minister for Health Sussan Ley said the Abbott Government had consulted closely with the mental health sector about their views on the Reviews' final recommendations and the most appropriate and practical ways to implement them to bring about real change for people with mental illness.

Ms Ley said the 13-person Expert Reference Group – led by respected business leader and former Beyond Blue CEO Kate Carnell AO – would engage with the wider mental health sector directly to support real-time, face-to-face feedback to inform an implementation action plan.

Ms Ley said she had tasked the Expert Reference Group with finalising an implementation action plan for the Review's recommendations in the short, medium and longer term to Government by October 2015.

"We have a real opportunity to deliver meaningful long-term reform through this Mental Health Commission Review and this Government is committed to action," Ms Ley said.

"However, it's clear from our consultations with the wider mental health sector following the release of the Mental Health Commission's Review that while there is broad support, there are still implementation issues to be ironed out.

"That's why this Expert Reference Group is so important to ensure the mental health sector and Government work together closely to ensure recommendations can be practically implemented from paper to policy as we finalise our action plan over the next few months.

"The whole of the mental health sector has a role to play as we move through this process together to ensure Australian mental health patients receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time."

Ms Ley said the Government had received broad support for the establishment of an Expert Reference Group to assess the practicality of the Review's recommendations.

The Expert Reference Group includes experts from across the mental health sector including primary care, suicide prevention, research, consumer representation, psychiatry, psychology and youth mental health.

“This group brings together extensive personal and professional experience and along with broad sector engagement would result in real improvements for mental health patients.”

The full list of committee members and terms of reference of the Expert Reference Group can be found at www.health.gov.au

Ms Ley said while the Expert Reference Group would first focus on the policy and programme changes which are within the direct responsibilities of the Commonwealth, it would inform Commonwealth input to the new National Mental Health Plan being developed with States and Territories.

Ms Ley said the National Mental Health Plan would be developed side-by-side with states and territories to provide mental health patients with consistent and continual care as they moved through the system.

“One of the key reasons fragmentation occurs in the mental health system is because of the complicated interactions between all levels of government,” Ms Ley said.

“In the coming months, I will be working closely with my state and territory government colleagues to develop a new National Mental Health Plan.

“Advice from the Expert Reference Group, as well as broader consultation being undertaken by the Department of Health, will feed into these discussions.”

ENDS

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