Coming soon: A new approach for our mental health system

Minister for Health Sussan Ley has encouraged all Australians to reach out to friends and family this Mental Health Week (October 2 to 10), and has foreshadowed significant structural reform of the mental health system.

Ms Ley said following the recommendations by the National Mental Health Commission’s review of mental health services, a mental health Expert Reference Group was established, and had now presented their implementation plan.

“I have received the Expert Reference Group’s implementation plan, and am now finalising a significant reform package that will better support Australians to receive the most appropriate mental health care first time, when and where they need it,” Ms Ley said.

“I will announce the Turnbull Government’s plans for mental health reform by the end of the year as we work to build the best system possible for Australian patients.”

Ms Ley said the National Mental Health Commission’s review into existing mental health programmes and services found it to be “fragmented, disjointed and tragically people continue to fall through the cracks.”

“From this review, it was clear that we needed to re-think our approach to mental health, and change the focus from a service-centred approach to one where services are organised around the needs of the person,” Ms Ley said.

“This is why we have sought advice from the Mental Health Expert Reference Group on how best to translate the National Mental Health Commission’s recommendations into an implementation plan to take the report from paper to policy.”

The Expert Reference Group has presented its report to Government and I expect to announce the details of what this will entail before the end of 2015.
Ms Ley said this year’s Mental Health Week theme is *Mental Health begins with me*, and encouraged all Australians to take part and make a mental health promise to themselves.

“Mental Health Week is held annually to raise awareness of mental health in the community, reduce the stigma associated with mental ill-health, and most importantly, to encourage help-seeking behaviour,” Ms Ley said.

“Good general health and well-being is important for mental health, and this year people are being encouraged to write a mental health promise to themselves that is achievable, such as eating more healthy meals or getting more sleep.”

Earlier this year, Ms Ley released the largest ever national survey of youth mental health of its kind and it painted a confronting picture around teenage depression, self-harm and suicide.

The landmark ‘Second Australian Child and Adolescent survey of Mental Health and Well-Being’ found one in seven children and young people experienced a mental disorder in the previous 12 months – the equivalent of 560,000 young Australians.

However, in positive news, the number of young Australians seeking help doubled compared with 15 years ago, and positive activities such as sports, exercise and healthy eating are now beating alcohol, drugs and smoking as the preferred way to handle mental health issues for the majority of teens.

“As a parent it’s heartbreakingly to see these prevalent stories of depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicidal tendencies amongst our young people, let alone as Health Minister,” Ms Ley said.

“However, when I see figures showing the majority of young people are now looking to join a sports team or activity, talk to a friend, or improve their diet to address mental health issues instead of turning to drugs, smoking or alcohol, that makes me immensely proud.

“There’s no doubt raising awareness is only half the battle – we need positive outcomes as well – but surveys such as this spur me on to ensure we get this current mental health reform right first time.”

**ENDS**

**Media Contact:** James Murphy 0478 333 974