



Act Now On Mental Illness

Commit to implementing the report of the National Mental Health Commission

Late in 2013 the Government asked the National Mental Health Commission to undertake a full review of the right way forward for Australia in tackling mental health and suicide prevention. For more than a year, the Commission consulted widely and researched extensively. Hundreds of face to face meetings were held in dozens of cities and towns across Australia, and more than 1800 written submissions were received.

During 2014, virtually all requests for policy directions or funding met with the response, 'We are waiting for the report of the NMHC before we make any major decisions in mental health'. We all accepted that, and waited patiently. On December 1st 2014, the report was handed to the Government. In the last five months, the only thing we have heard from the Government is that it is not going to implement one of the recommendations, and that was only because the report was leaked.

This report, which sets out a ten-year plan for achieving better outcomes, deserves more respect than this, as do the thousands of people who contributed, the hundreds of thousands of people living with debilitating mental illnesses, and the millions of Australians who care about mental health as a national priority.

Australia can do better, and it is not all about more money, as the report makes clear. Services can be better organised to get them talking to each other. The confusions about the NDIS and its impact on mental health funding can be clarified. Suicide can be reduced if we apply all the best evidence from here and overseas.

There have been dozens of reports about mental health in Australia, several big ones in the last few years. For all sorts of reasons, these seem to have little impact.

'Succeeding Together'

This one should be different, because it was commissioned by the Government, generally supported across all parties, and repeatedly described by the Government as the report that would point the way forwards on mental health.

It's not perfect. I could argue with some of the detail. But my own experiences with mental illness and the mental health services tell me that it seems to be about right on all the big issues. Most importantly, it gives us all a framework that we can get started on as the first part of a ten year plan. Let's argue the detail after we get started on implementation.

I hope you can commit to helping to see a start made on implementing the report. I know Australia has budget constraints, and that not all of this will be easy to implement as soon as we would like. What I want is your commitment to use your influence to making sure we are doing all we can to get started. We don't want to hear about referrals to committees, expensive consultants or 'experts' to consider the report, until we have a commitment from the Government that it will use the report as the agreed framework to start tackling reform. Commitment from the other parties as well would be even better.

Please do all you can to have the report of the National Mental Health Commission adopted as the 10 year plan Australia needs. We have waited too long to let this great opportunity be lost.

Your signature