



MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED AND NOT FOR USE PRIOR TO WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 10TH, 2018

Latest Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia campaign urges more action on mental health as staggering figures reveal 62% of all GP presentations are now for mental health issues.

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia’s Tony Stevenson says 3.8 million people now live with a mental illness, including 690,000 people who are living with severe mental illness. \$500 million is desperately needed for support services to help people impacted by mental health issues.

The latest Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) campaign is urging the Federal and State Governments to invest \$500 million a year in desperately needed mental health support services for people with severe mental illness.

The call has come as staggering figures reveal 62% of all GP presentations are now for mental health issues.

MIFA is highlighting that unless Australia addresses the significant issue of mental health, taxpayers will be funding ever increasing costs of acute mental health services, homelessness, prisons and lost productivity.

Tony Stevenson – the National Chief Executive Officer for MIFA – says it is critical there is more government action on mental illness because there are now 3.8 million people living with a mental illness in Australia.

Tony Stevenson said, “A massive 690,000 people are living with severe mental illness. We simply have to do more. Without question another \$500 million is desperately needed. The extra money is urgently needed from the Federal and State and Territory Governments to prevent suicide, reduce dependency on higher level and costly clinical supports and address the social and health disadvantages of severe mental illness.”

Tony Stevenson highlights there are at least 290,000 people across Australia with mental health issues - who have highly complex challenges which require targeted treatment ... in the right way at the right time ... (referred to as “Stepped Care”) - so that they can continue to live well in the community for as long as possible.

He highlights by dealing with these complex challenges head on, the time that people will need to spend in acute mental health care in hospital is reduced – which is the most expensive level of care for governments to foot the bill for.

Tony Stevenson further highlights there are at least 225,000 people with psychosocial disability who are not currently eligible for the NDIS and he says this is very concerning.

MIFA says mental health in Australia is currently very fragmented and says whilst the NDIS has brought positive change to some people's lives, there is always room for clear improvement.

MIFA highlights we need to address the attitudes and beliefs that sadly exclude people with mental illness from workplaces, communities and social circles.

As part of its new awareness campaign the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia:

- Wants people to realise people with severe mental illness can live well in the community and do recover if the right clinical and community support is there.
- Appreciate the social and health benefits for people with severe mental illness when the right support is available.
- Appreciate the clear benefits to the community and the economy when people with severe mental illness are supported in the actual community and kept out of costly acute mental health care facilities.

Tony Stevenson said, "There are so many ways people can practically help a person who has mental health issues. People need to look past the stigma and accept the person in the same way they would for someone with a more 'socially acceptable' illness."

"We urge people to open up conversations about mental illness in their families, communities and workplaces."

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia urges people everywhere to reach out for help. People can either call Mi Networks on 1800 985 944 ... a free service which offers guidance on mental health issues ... or people can go to www.minetworks.org.au.

Media enquiries to: Media Key on 03 9769 6488

About MIFA:

- Long-standing national federation of seven organisations across Australia formed in 1986.
- 60 front doors across Australia.
- Over 20,000 participants supported each year.
- Over 50% of the workforce has lived experience as either a consumer or carer.
- MIFA delivers specialist place-based, community-building programs with a strong focus on recovery and lived experience.