



**MENTAL ILLNESS  
FELLOWSHIP  
of Australia Inc**

e. [mifa@mifa.org.au](mailto:mifa@mifa.org.au)

w. [www.mifa.org.au](http://www.mifa.org.au)

p. 07 3004 6914

[www.minetworks.org.au](http://www.minetworks.org.au) - 1800 985 944

TO: The Ministerial Drug & Alcohol Forum

8 February 2017

RE: National Alcohol Strategy: Consultation Draft

Dear Ministerial Drug and Alcohol Forum,

We welcome the recognition in the National Alcohol Strategy of the particular risk of harm from alcohol use among people with mental health issues. People with schizophrenia are more than three times, and people with bipolar disorders more than five times more likely to have an alcohol use disorder.<sup>1</sup> People often use substances to cope with or alleviate their symptoms.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the experience of our members and their participants is that people with co-occurring alcohol and mental health issues struggle to find services that have the willingness and expertise to support them. We have heard of people being turned away either because a mental health provider does not have the expertise to work people with co-occurring substance use issues, or because alcohol and other drug services will not work with people with severe mental illness.

While Priority Area 3 acknowledges people with comorbid mental health issues as an at-risk population<sup>3</sup>, there are no clear opportunities for action that will specifically support this population. Under Priority Area 3, Objective 2, MIFA advocates specific reference to improving the availability of clinical and psychosocial services specialising in “dual diagnoses” or co-occurring mental health and alcohol issues.

Yours faithfully,

Tony Stevenson  
National Chief Executive Officer

<sup>1</sup> Regier, D. A., Farmer, M. F., Rae, D. S., Locke, B. Z., Keith, S. J., Judd, L. L., et al. (1990). Comorbidity of mental disorders with alcohol and other drug abuse: Results from the Epidemiologic Catchment Area (ECA) Study. *The Journal of American Medical Association*, volume 264 (19), pp.251-2518.

<sup>2</sup> Gregg, L., Barrowclough, C., and Haddock, G. (2007). Reasons for increased substance use in psychosis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, vol 27, pp 494-510.

<sup>3</sup> p9 and p20, Consultation Draft: National Alcohol Strategy 2018-2026



*“succeeding together”*

**Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)**  
**President: Mick Reid**