

NSW Consumer Advisory
Group - Mental Health Inc

Contact: Karen Oakley

Executive Officer
NSW Consumer Advisory Group - Mental Health Inc
501/80 William Street
Sydney NSW 2000

02 9332 0200 Phone

02 9332 0299 Fax

koakley@nswcag.org.au Email



Media Release

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A CALL TO FEDERAL PARTIES TO COMMIT TO COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc (NSW CAG) calls on federal parties to make a commitment to enhancing community mental health services.

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc. (NSW CAG), the peak body representing people who use mental health services in NSW calls on the federal parties to make election commitments to enhancing community mental health services.

NSW CAG Executive Officer, Karen Oakley said “The focus at a federal level remains on funding more mental health beds. This is not the direction that needs to be taken to deliver recovery oriented, consumer directed services. While inpatient services are an important component of the care spectrum, it is time for a focus on enhancing community services, both those provided by the public and non-government sectors. Community services are critical to enabling people to remain connected to their communities and families, remain in work, and recover and reintegrate with the

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community. Enhancement of community services is being cried out for by people with a mental illness everywhere.”

“While the first priority area in the fourth National Mental Health Plan is about enhancing social inclusion and recovery, and the second on prevention and early intervention, these cannot be achieved with a federal focus on increasing hospital beds.”

In talking with mental health consumers throughout NSW, NSW CAG is clear that the majority of people living with a mental illness, if given a choice, will seek appropriate support within the community when they require assistance. Further, it is widely acknowledged by current policy that, whenever possible, providing mental health care in the community is the most appropriate place to deliver the support people experiencing a mental illness need (Australian Health Ministers, 2009; Mental Health Council of Australia, 2006). This policy is based on the evidence of both the cost and clinical effectiveness of community based care (NSW Health, 2008).

Ms Oakley said “Federal parties must make a strong commitment in policy and funding to community mental health services to improve the outcomes for people with a mental illness, reduce potentially preventable hospital admissions and ensure access to quality health care meeting the needs of people.”

NSW CAG looks forward to seeing refreshed commitments to community mental health services leading up to the election; commitments that will enable the mental health system to progress, be focused on the needs of the people it is there to serve, and to live up to the promises in national policies and plans.

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FOR ENQUIRES OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Karen Oakley
Executive Officer
NSW Consumer Advisory Group - Mental Health Inc (NSW CAG)

Phone 02 9332 0200

Fax 02 9332 0299

Email koakley@nswcag.org.au

www.nswcag.org.au

ABOUT THE NSW CONSUMER ADVISORY GROUP – MENTAL HEALTH INC

The NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc (NSW CAG) is the statewide, incorporated, non-government peak body that represents people who use mental health services (mental health consumers) to all levels of the NSW Government. In this way NSW CAG acts as a bridge between mental health consumers and the government.

An essential part of our role is to encourage mental health consumers to provide input into decision making at all levels concerning mental health service provision.

NSW CAG is funded by the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office, NSW Department of Health.

WHO IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER?

A mental health consumer is a person who has used mental health services. NSW CAG also hears from people who do not have this experience, but who have the experience of mental illness.