



Media Release

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PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IMPACTED - NSW GOVERNMENT REVISES STATE PLAN

The **NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health Inc (NSW CAG)** is concerned about revisions to the **NSW State Plan** released by the Government on 29 October 2009, which presents three key priority areas that impact on people who experience mental illness:

- ▼ Improve and maintain access to quality health care in the face of increasing demand
- ▼ Reduce potentially preventable hospital admissions
- ▼ Improve outcomes in mental health

“The Government’s success in delivering these targets will depend upon a continuing investment in the enhancement of community services for people who experience a mental illness” says Karen Oakley, Executive Officer of NSW CAG.

“NSW CAG regularly hears from people who use mental health services across NSW that current community services are inadequate. We have heard of instances where a person is forced to present to an emergency department because they are unable to access support within the community. This places an additional strain on already overburdened hospitals and does not enable people to remain well, or receive support within the community.”

“We are also aware that in many regions consumers are only able to access case management within the community if they are under a Community Treatment Order under the Mental Health Act. This means that the majority of people who need such services are unable to access them.”

“These situations clearly point to the need to enhance community mental health services, and the need for investment for such services so that they can meet the true needs of people who experience a mental illness.”

In particular, NSW CAG indicates there is a strong need for:

- ▼ The development of flexible service models that enable people who experience mental illness to increase and decrease the levels of clinical and non-clinical supports provided to them within the community as needed.
- ▼ Increased case management services, with an overhaul and simplification of referral and service access pathways. An increase in funding for case management and care coordination would do much to address and improve outcomes in mental health, through increasing the rate of follow-up care in the community, which is one of the targets in the revised State Plan.
- ▼ Increased and sustained funding for services to support people with a mental illness to engage in social and community activities, networks and employment, and enable broader community participation and social inclusion of mental health consumers.

Karen Oakley says “that while the **Community Mental Health Strategy** released by NSW Health in 2008 and accompanying funding recognises the importance of enhancing community services, the commitment to community services through allocation of funding remains inadequate. This needs to be addressed by Government if it is to remain true to its commitment to delivering quality health services to those who experience mental illness”.

[END]

FOR ENQUIRES OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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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.

WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMER?

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