



MEDIA RELEASE

A massive 154,000 people across Australia, who have a severe or complex mental illness, are getting absolutely no support in the community for their condition warns the key not-for-profit Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia.

National CEO Tony Stevenson says the neglect of people with mental illness in Australia is on a huge scale highlighting that thousands and thousands of Australians are currently ending up in hospitals and emergency departments because they simply don't know where else to go.

The key not-for-profit, Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA), is highlighting that a huge 154,000 people nationally, who have a severe or complex mental illness, are getting no community support whatsoever for their condition.

MIFA says it is absolutely critical to end the massive neglect of people who have mental illness in Australia.

The organisation highlights that an alarming half of all people who have a severe mental health condition in Australia are simply not getting the support they need. MIFA points out thousands and thousands of Australians with mental health issues are ending up in hospitals and emergency departments because they believe it is the only option for them.

Tony Stevenson – National CEO of MIFA – said, “Governments appear to have no appetite to sort out these key issues. The funding for support to help people with severe mental or complex illnesses outside of the NDIS is completely inadequate, totally fragmented and inequitable.”

“We are highlighting as part of this new awareness campaign that the current system actively channels people into emergency and hospital services placing massive extra pressure on the system. So much trauma is involved with this process.”

“We absolutely need a new focus on prevention and supporting recovery. There needs to be much greater investment in community mental health recovery services.”

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia highlights a staggering number of Australians are now getting absolutely no community support for their mental health issues.

It is estimated this totals 154,000 Australians with a severe or complex mental illness.

Tony Stevenson points out this is enough people to fill a giant stadium like the MCG or the SCG one and a half times.

Tony Stevenson added, "Unfortunately there are so many down sides for people if they don't get the support they need early. The result is greater long-term costs to our health system, increased risk of unemployment and homelessness, as well as increased interactions with police, justice and corrections.

"It has been over 30 years since governments around the nation started shutting psychiatric institutions. This was an important step and we were told there would be services in the community instead. The reality is there just isn't the support in the community when it comes to support services."

"As part of our awareness campaign we urge people to realise recovery is unquestionably possible. We have a key not-for-profit network called Finding North which has become a growing community on the internet, to link people with mental health issues with others in a similar situation so they can share their experiences. To get more information, just go to www.findingnorth.org.au"

Tony Stevenson said it is alarming that people with mental health issues (on average) lead shorter lives and may die up to 23 years earlier than the general population. He says approximately 50% of people with the most severe illness attempt suicide (compared 3.7% in the general population).

Tony Stevenson says people with severe or complex mental illnesses can experience relationship breakdowns, loss of employment, homelessness, marginalisation and stigma, long stays in hospital, increased dependence on income support, loss of educational opportunities, and interactions with police and the justice system.

**Media enquiries to Media Key on 0409 420 112 or 03 9769 6488
Tony Stevenson is available for media interviews**

To find out more about Finding North, just go to www.findingnorth.org.au