



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **MIFA demands urgent action from all Governments in Australia to support people with severe mental illness**

Tony Stevenson, CEO of the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA), today expressed his disappointment at the lack of urgent action on psychosocial support for people living with severe mental illness, following the Australian Health Ministers meeting on Friday 16 August 2024.

The Australian and state and territory governments met on 16 August to review the Final Report of the Analysis of Unmet Need for Psychosocial Supports Outside of the NDIS (Final Report).

MIFA acknowledges the Ministers' immediate release of the Unmet Needs Report, and welcomes the commitment to continue to work together. However, Ministers failed to commit to concrete measures to invest in additional psychosocial support services for people with severe mental health conditions in Australia. This is in spite of the estimate of the Final Report that around 230,500 people with a severe mental health condition (aged 12 to 64 years) were missing out on psychosocial supports. This compares with the Productivity Commission's estimate of 154,000 people. ***The need is undeniable, its growing, and people with severe mental health conditions continue to be neglected, and denied their basic human right to live well and safely in their community.***

It has been 30 years since State and Territory Governments in Australia started closing Psychiatric Institutions. Governments promised that people living with severe mental health conditions would be supported to live well and safely in their community. The Productivity Commission estimated that 50% of that group of Australians were still missing out on support. The Final Report indicates that the number missing out is now around 68%. These Australians are missing out on the community-based psychosocial supports they and their families and carers desperately need to improve their quality of life and be equally valued and respected.

Addressing this gap is a national Human Rights issue. Achieving better outcomes for *all* people with severe mental health conditions ensures that Australia meets its obligations within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability. It helps us achieve the inclusive and diverse community that Australians are proud to be known for, that values the potential and contributions of each person.

Without adequate psychosocial supports people with severe mental health conditions will continue to experience:

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- Shorter lives – on average, people with severe mental illness die up to 23 years earlier than the general population
- Attempts to take their own lives – approximately 50% of people with the most severe mental illness attempt suicide, compared to 3.7% of the general population
- Relationship breakdowns, loss of employment, homelessness, marginalisation and stigma, long stays in hospital, increased dependence on income support, loss of educational opportunities, and involvement with police and the justice system.

Around Australia we are seeing serious issues around excessive emergency department wait times, and critical blockages to access to psychiatric and psychological services. These issues would be substantially remedied by addressing the gap in community based psychosocial services, and keeping people well in the community. These services also cost substantially less than crisis or hospital based services which is the only remaining option.

MIFA calls on Australian Governments to commit funding ***in the next budget cycle*** to establish a genuinely national psychosocial support program to address the identified gaps in psychosocial support for people with severe mental health conditions, based on the findings of the Final Report.

Ends

*To get help 24/7, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467. If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, phone 000 for emergency services.*

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