



MEDIA RELEASE

The not-for-profit Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) says a staggering 460,000 people have absolutely no access to much needed community support for their mental health conditions and MIFA says the numbers are continuing to grow.

MIFA CEO, Tony Stevenson, warns the neglect is on a massive scale with thousands and thousands of Australians with mental health challenges ending up in hospitals and emergency departments because it is their only option.

Friday October 10th is World Mental Health Day. MIFA is highlighting there needs to be a much stronger connection between the community and people facing mental health challenges.

The not-for-profit Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) says it is deeply disturbing that latest data shows at least 230,500 people who have a severe mental health condition are missing out completely on psycho-social supports.

MIFA says a staggering 460,000 people have absolutely no access to much needed community support for their mental health conditions.

MIFA CEO, Tony Stevenson, says unquestionably the numbers are growing. He highlights that at the current time people with a severe mental illness die 23 years earlier than the general population. He says this is utterly shameful.

Tony Stevenson highlights whereas 3.7% of the general population attempt suicide, when it comes to severe mental illness, 50% of people affected attempt suicide.

The latest MIFA campaign highlights an estimated 68% of people with a severe mental illness are currently missing out on any form of community support – in round numbers this is nearly 7 in 10.

Tony Stevenson said, "We are utterly focused on wiping away the terrible discrimination that surrounds severe mental illness in this country. It is time people who are affected get much more support."

"The neglect is on a massive scale. The sad bottom line is that thousands and thousands of Australians with mental health conditions are ending up in local hospitals and emergency departments because it is their only option."

"We're calling for action from all governments because it is time to do much more about severe mental illness. People with severe mental illness can be affected by numerous complex issues. This includes relationship breakdown, loss of employment, homelessness, long stays in hospital, marginalisation, stigma and involvement with the police and justice system."

Tony Stevenson added, "The theme of this year's campaign is Connect for Mental Health. Friday October 10th is World Mental Health Day. MIFA is asking everybody to connect with information about mental health; connect with other people with first-hand experience of mental health issues and connect for change. MIFA has drawn up a special petition for members of the public to sign."

"Right now there are critical blockages taking place, preventing people from accessing community support services. We have been calling for action for a lengthy period of time. We still aren't seeing the necessary steps being taken."

"Ministers have failed to commit concrete measures to invest in better support services for people with a severe mental health condition. It seems governments have no appetite to sort the issues out. Funding is completely inadequate and totally fragmented."

"We are calling on Australian governments to commit substantial funding in the next budget cycle to help people with severe mental health conditions."

"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 added, "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. That has not happened. This is totally unacceptable."

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