

Mental health moves towards individualised care: FECCA calls for multicultural communities to be a priority

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) welcomes the Government's announcement today on a complete mental health reform, following the National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programme and Services.

FECCA Chairperson Joe Caputo said, "We are very pleased the Government has taken steps towards a comprehensive mental health system. It is encouraging that all Australians suffering from severe and complex mental illness will have access to person-centric integrated care packages, which will be rolled out in local communities."

The details of the reform recommend:

- Move towards a 'stepped care' model or person-centric approach;
- All Australians with a severe and complex mental illness will have access to an integrated team-care packaged tailored to their individual needs;
- Services will be localised and delivered through Primary Healthcare Networks (PHNs);
- A new coordinated approach to suicide prevention, focusing on evidence and community based prevention activities;
- Innovative digital mental health technologies will be harnessed through a single point gateway;
- Nationally coordinated services covering early childhood through to the end of secondary school, expected to be rolled out from July 1 2016;
- National leadership with states and territories through the 5th national Mental Health Plan.

Joe Caputo said, "While the reforms make reference to multicultural communities, it is our recommendation that a strong focus is placed on these communities in the implementation."

According to the National Mental Health Commission's Review *Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities*, people from diverse cultural backgrounds may be less likely to disclose signs or symptoms and may not feel comfortable seeking help.

Also identified in the Review were gaps in culturally competent, sensitive and appropriate mental health and suicide prevention services and programmes.

FECCA urges the Government to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse communities are recognised as a vulnerable group in the mental health system and considered as a priority, requiring their unique mental health needs to be met in a culturally sensitive and appropriate way. The knowledge and insights developed through the Mental Health in Multicultural Australia (MHIMA) project are essential in this regard.

Special consideration in the reforms implementation should be given to new migrants and refugees, particularly in view of the additional humanitarian intake and refugee experiences of torture and trauma. FECCA also acknowledges that with current measures around countering violent extremism, there is a need for access to tailored mental health services for individuals and families.

"We are committed to working with the Government and the key stakeholders in multicultural community mental health to ensure that these reforms achieve positive outcomes for our constituency", said Joe Caputo.

Media Comments: FECCA Office – (02) 6282 5755, media@fecca.org.au.