

Community Mental Health Australia Update

Key meetings with MPs and others

CMHA has met with a number of Federal Members of Parliament over the past couple of months with further meetings scheduled. On 29 September 2016 CMHA met with Minister Christian Porter's office and raised issues for the community managed mental health sector with the NDIS, in particular, and other major reforms such as the Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and the Productivity Commission inquiry into contestability and competition in human services.

Meetings also have been or will be held with the following Federal MPs:

- Julie Collins, Shadow Mental Health Minister
- Senator Rachel Siewert, Greens mental health spokesperson
- Chair of Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Senator Jonathon Duniam
- Kathy O'Toole, Federal Member for Herbert and former CEO for a community managed mental health organisation
- Senator Skye Kakoschke-Moore, Xenophon team mental health spokesperson

The main issues CMHA is raising regarding the NDIS are:

- The pricing structure of the NDIS and the impacts of qualified mental health staffing.
- Inconsistency and lack of transparency in the bilateral agreements.
- The eligibility criteria and people not testing eligibility and receiving services
- The NDIS focus on disability support rather than rehabilitation, which is the mental health focus

A range of other meetings have been held with organisations in the mental health sector and the wider human services and social services sector. CMHA and states and territories are also attending the NDIS Invitational Roundtables on mental health being held around the country, and CMHA will be meeting with the Productivity Commission Chair at the end of October 2016.

Submission to Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Savings Fund Special Account Bill 2016

CMHA made a submission to the Senate inquiry into the *NDIS Savings Fund Special Account Bill*, which establishes a special account to fund the NDIS. It states savings from other areas, primarily from human and social services, will be redirected to this account. Credits to the account may also come from:

- underspends and net savings from the NDIS and other portfolio savings, as determined by the Minister for Social Services;
- discretionary decisions by the Prime Minister or the Cabinet (for example, to establish a starting balance at the special account's commencement); and
- decisions by the Prime Minister or the Cabinet about identified savings from other Commonwealth portfolios.

The key issues raised in the CMHA submission were:

- Having a sound and thorough understanding of costings associated with the NDIS when determining where underspends should be directed and in establishing a special account that is to fund the NDIS into the future.

- Mental health cannot be 'made' to fit the NDIS, and it must be funded accurately through an appropriate mechanism. Not doing so may result in people missing out on services, additional pressure placed on the health and social services system, and the loss of evidence-based, best practice psychosocial services.
- How the system will respond to people with psycho-social disability, and it is vital that key learnings and issues that emerge from the trial sites for service providers, consumers and carers are listened to and accounted for.
- There is further detail required on particular aspects of the Bill including ongoing government investment in the NDIS beyond the Bills 10-year commitment; how are savings redirected into the account identified and how are funding areas prioritised; and what information is used to inform Ministerial and Cabinet decisions on the funding.

The submission can be viewed on the Australian Parliament website at http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/NDISSavingsFund/Submissions

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