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Federal Government must take responsibility for mental health

Community Mental Health Australia (CMHA) President Liz Crowther today appeared before a hearing of the Joint Standing Committee on NDIS inquiry on mental health in the NDIS and called on all governments, including the Federal Government, to take responsibility for mental health.

‘The most significant issue and concern for CMHA is the gap in service provision that will be created with the transferring of funds for federally funded mental health programs, particularly PIR and PHaMs, to the NDIS whilst many of the people currently receiving assistance from the funding will be ineligible for the NDIS.’

‘We currently have both the Department of Health and DSS saying they do not have policy responsibility or accountability for people with a mental illness who won’t be eligible for the NDIS’ Ms Crowther said.

‘It is simply not good enough for the Federal Government to state we don’t have responsibility or it is not our accountability, when they have been funding services for well over a decade and removes the funding with nothing to replace it, with an expectation that the states and territories will fill this void.’

‘The federal government and states and territories are effectively at brinkmanship over who will provide funding. Meanwhile the ACT is at full transition and the rest of the country continues on the path to the NDIS, and the people with a mental illness that no government will take responsibility for continue to be seen by community based mental health services with nothing for these people to be referred to.’

‘The Federal Government must continue to fund a flexible, low barrier to entry service that sits outside of the NDIS for people who need ongoing community and coordination support. Such a service cannot sit within the NDIS’.

‘CMHA remains committed to the NDIS and the benefits that it can bring to the lives of people living with mental health issues. The key issue is that the NDIS was never meant to be and cannot replace the mental health system,’ Ms Crowther said.

‘Both disability and psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery services must be part of a continuum of support for people living with a mental illness. It is vital that governments’ work in partnership with community managed mental health service providers to develop solutions to concerns and issues that have emerged. Both the federal, state and territory governments are responsible, and we as a community are responsible.’

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