

COAG AGREES ON NEW NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR MENTAL HEALTH

10 February 2006

NSW Premier, Morris Iemma, today welcomed a new era of cooperation between Australian Governments on the critical issue of mental health.

The COAG answered the Premier's call for a new National Action Plan to overcome the challenges in providing services for people with a mental illness.

"At long last, there is hope for people with a mental illness and their families," Mr Iemma said.

"It is an historic day – we have set aside our State / Commonwealth and political differences that have frustrated the community for years on this priority area.

"The COAG has recognised that we need to focus on caring for people in the community and assisting them to live a better quality of life.

"Having called for mental health to be placed on the national agenda, I commit NSW to further driving immediate reform."

The new National Action Plan for Mental Health (to be finalised within three months) includes:

- A renewed focus on promotion, prevention and early intervention;
- Getting the balance right between primary care, community care and hospital care;
- Improving the system so people can access the right care at the right time – right across the spectrum from general practice services to emergency departments;
- Addressing the significant workforce barriers, including increasing the size of the workforce and broadening the roles of nurses, psychologists and GPs in the mental health system.

Mr Iemma said NSW had recorded an important win in today's discussions.

"The COAG agreed that mental health services must be an integral element of the new National Health Call Centre," Mr Iemma said.

"The States and Commonwealth will invest an extra \$20 million to establish a dedicated mental health component of the new National Health Call Centre."