

NSW CALLS FOR NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SUMMIT

20 October 2005

NSW Premier Morris Iemma today called for national summit to deliver improvements to mental health services across Australia.

Mr Iemma said better mental health services could only be delivered through a partnership between the State and Federal Governments.

“For too long mental health has been a political football,” Mr Iemma said.

“It’s time for all governments to deliver practical solutions that will improve the quality of care for people with mental illnesses, their families and carers.

“To do this a national summit convened by COAG is necessary, attended by the Premiers, the Prime Minister and all health ministers,” Mr Iemma said.

Mr Iemma said the facts on Mental Health were:

- The NSW Government this year increased its funding for mental health services by 9.1% to \$854 million;
- In 2004, the NSW Government announced an additional \$241 million in funding over four years;
- The NSW Government has funded the opening of 283 mental health beds since 2001 with plans to open another 290 over the next four years; and
- 45% of the state’s mental health budget is spent on community mental health services.

“The issues have been identified, but more needs to be done.

“Now it’s time to act,” Mr Iemma said.

Mr Iemma said the Summit must develop solutions to issues including:

- Undergraduate training opportunities – particularly in relation to mental health nursing;
- The immigration of trained psychiatrists from countries such as the United Kingdom;
- Providing greater incentives for GPs to be involved in the treatment of serious mental illness in the community;
- Providing vocational training that caters for and is targeted at people with mental illness;
- Providing increased funding through the Home and Community Care Program for disability caused specifically by mental illness; and
- Providing more respite care and support for carers and their families.

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