

Media Release

September 20th 2005

There is no doubt that mental health services in NSW are in a state of crises. The workforce is depleted as a result of inadequate promotion of mental health as a skilled and vibrant career option for both nurses and doctors. This coupled with poor morale resulting from staff witnessing the same clients 'revolving' through the system year after year with interventions failing to be maintained long after discharge, creates a system in need of immediate overhaul.

Recent media focus has highlighted the appalling neglect of rehabilitation and disability support services which was allowed to continue and escalate over the 1990s under the direction of the then Director for Mental Health Beverley Raphael.

After grasping the issues as NSW Health Minister we now hold out hope that Premier lemma will develop a mental health system in NSW that no longer disowns responsibility once people pass through the hospital gates. Finally there appears to be some light on the horizon for people with mental illness as Premier lemma focuses on creating a vision for the future of mental health service delivery in NSW.

Many people find it extremely difficult to manage their daily lives after acute mental illness and need follow up care in line with their level of need.

Executive Officer of the Mental Health Coordinating Council, Jenna Bateman, states,

"Providing people with accommodation support, assistance with getting back to work and social engagement is all part of the recovery path. This is not rocket science but a simple human fact. One that Premier lemma understands and is committed to progressing in NSW."

"The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative usually referred to as HASI has been evaluated and clearly demonstrates that people with mental health problems can be supported so that they do not live a life where frequent returns to hospital for acute care are part and parcel of their illness."

Finally we may see some relief in NSW for those who end up homeless or isolated in dilapidated rooms or distressing friends and relatives whilst they slowly getting sicker and sicker until the police are called to cart them off to hospital.

"Premier lemma is to be congratulated on making the first moves to dragging NSW into better practices and programs for people with mental illness. The Mental Health Coordinating Council maintains a watching brief on progress and a sustained level of commitment from the Premier but at this point there is clearly some light on the horizon and we look forward to working with the government to achieve shared aims."

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*MHCC is the peak
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