

# Premier to discuss mental health at COAG

The NSW Premier, Morris Iemma will meet with the Prime Minister to discuss the challenges in mental health at a meeting of the nation's leaders in February. The Federal Government says it is ready to tackle the mental health crisis in Australia and will present a plan to state and territory leaders at the Council of Australian Government (COAG) meeting on February 10.

This meeting may well have been prompted by the Mental Health Council of Australia's, 'Not for Service' report on mental health, launched in October last year, which claimed the health system was failing the mentally ill and political wrangling was partly to blame. The report recommended a whole of government service model be developed and agreed to by COAG.

A spokeswoman for the Parliamentary Secretary for Health Christopher Pyne says the Government recognises the need for major changes in services for the mentally ill. She says there is particular concern about the lack of accommodation for people with mental illnesses.

The Premier has acknowledged that much more needs to be done, and that's why NSW is finalising a plan to reshape mental health services with a focus on care in the community. The Premier believes we need developments in a range of areas including:

- more nurses and doctors to be trained, as well as psychiatrists recruited from overseas locations such as the UK
- more links between GPs and public mental health services so that treatment can start earlier
- more incentives for private psychiatrists to work in the public sector.
- a way to remove the stigma around mental illness
- create more educational and employment opportunities for people with a mental illness as non-clinical rehabilitation is an important part of the recovery process
- better support families and carers with more respite care and disability support.