

Media release

For immediate release

Hospital stays for people with mental illness avoidable

New report highlights need for investment to ease pressure on hospital system

(22 September 2016) A report released today from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has highlighted that overnight hospital stays for people with mental illness accounted for 14% of all nights that Australians spent in hospital in 2013/2014.

The report *Hospitalisations for mental health conditions and intentional self-harm in 2013–14* also shows that there were 33,956 intentional self-harm admissions accounting for 184,332 hospital bed days nationally, suggesting excess pressure on an already-strained hospital system.

Rob Ramjan AM, CEO of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW, says this pressure is avoidable with increased funding for preventative mental health programs.

“There will always be a need for acute and sub-acute psychiatric care in hospitals. However, the data in this report is compelling evidence for the need to invest more to prevent admissions and avoid readmission after discharge,” Mr Ramjan said.

“The majority of readmissions (30%) occur within the first three months post-discharge. Suicide is most frequent in the first two weeks after leaving hospital, with most occurring on the first day.

“One of the most vulnerable times for someone with a mental illness is post-discharge. We need to ensure that when they leave hospital that they are transitioned into a safe, secure and supported environment. SFNSW’s Hospital 2 Home program was highly successful in filling this very need.

“Of our Hospital 2 Home participants since December 2015, zero people have presented at emergency and none have been readmitted to hospital.”

Despite its success, SFNSW’s Hospital 2 Home program has recently been defunded.

“There is strong evidence that this program saves lives and eases pressure on the hospital system so its defunding is counter-intuitive.

“Investment in preventative measures is critical if we are to reduce the estimated \$200 billion per year mental ill-health costs Australia,” Mr Ramjan said.

Approximately 45% of the population aged 16–85 years will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime making mental illness a national health priority.

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For further information or to arrange an interview with Rob Ramjan AM contact:

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Note to Editors:

The Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc. (SFNSW) is a leading community mental health service provider committed to improving the lives of people living with a serious and persistent mental illness and their carers. In the last year SFNSW supported more than 10,000 people living with mental illness.