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NSW mental health workers unite to call for urgent action ahead of state election

14 Mar 2023

Media release

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A first-hand account from the frontline of New South Wales' mental health sector has described a system of chaos, confusion, fiscal neglect and fragmentation, in a new report released today.

The NSW mental health care system on the brink: Evidence from the frontline contains qualitative data from over 1300 mental health practitioners, including psychiatrists, GPs, mental health nurses, psychologists, community mental health workers and peer workers in NSW, and outlines critical issues in the state's mental health system that need urgent government attention.

The report comes from the NSW Branch of the RANZCP in partnership with an alliance of peak bodies representing mental health workers, consumers and carers across NSW, who are calling on all parties to commit to comprehensive reform and investment in the next parliament.

Dr Angelo Virgona, Chair of the NSW Branch of RANZCP said the report paints a picture of despair.

"New South Wales is languishing. The mental health workers across the state describe a system that's too complex, too hard to access, fragmented and

weighed down with inequality,” said Dr Virgona.

“I hesitate to call it a system because that would assume some level of coherence.

“While the system is fragmented, NSW health workers are united. We want to see commitment towards the sector being better resourced, better managed, more coherent, and better connected.”

Productivity Commission data shows NSW has the lowest spend per capita for mental health in 2020-21 – a gap set to widen with recent commitments from Queensland and Victoria to bolster the sector. The alliance is urging all political parties to commit to improving the mental health outcomes of NSW residents.

The alliance is calling for a commitment to:

- **Establish an expert taskforce** within 12 months, to conduct a gap analysis of mental health services across the state
- **Improve access and quality of care** through more coherent and connected services, informed by active engagement with key health stakeholders and best-practice, evidence-based care
- **Inject new funding** into the state’s mental health system and workforce, similar to Victoria and Queensland

“These are complex problems requiring innovative solutions, and we stand ready, willing and able to work with the Government at every point,” said Dr Virgona.

“Inaction on mental health care will see a further disintegration of service delivery, with devastating consequences to individuals, families, and, ultimately, the whole of the NSW community.

“We don’t need another commission or inquiry. They’ve been done. The issues are known, as are many of the fixes.

“Other states are showing it can be done. It’s NSW’s turn.”

The report can be viewed [here](#).

ENQUIRIES: For media enquiries contact +61 437 315 911, or email media@ranzcp.org.

About the report:

The report comes from the NSW Branch of the RANZCP in partnership with an alliance of peak bodies representing mental work workers, consumers and carers across NSW to improve investment in mental health services and champion system reform and redesign, particularly in areas of governance and service integration.

These groups include:

- Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, NSW Branch
- Mental Health Coordinating Council
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Australian Psychological Society
- Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
- Australian Medical Association (NSW)
- BEING – Mental Health Consumers
- Mental Health Carers NSW

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or www.lifeline.org.nz/suicide-prevention.



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RANZCP Head Office

309 LaTrobe Street
Melbourne VIC
3000
Australia

T: 1800 337 448
(Australia)
T: 0800 443 827
(New Zealand)

E:
ranzcp@ranzcp.org

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