

MEDIA RELEASE

20 February 2020

Vinnies calls for national vision for mental health services

The St Vincent de Paul Society National Council has called for a clear, national vision for mental health services, supported by adequate government funding in its recommendations to the Productivity Commission's Mental Health Review.

The submission outlines how the Society supports people living with mental health conditions and highlights what is effective. It identifies what should be done, from a community-based perspective, to improve the mental health services systems.

Recommendations include the need for:

- recognition and increased funding of community-based, psychosocial support services,
- improved coordination and case management between mental health, alcohol and drug and other health services,
- increased access to appropriate housing,
- psychosocial support, social participation and inclusion particularly for those who do not meet eligibility requirements for NDIS,
- increased income support to lift recipients out of poverty to improve their mental health, and
- improved reporting, accountability and transparency with respect to mental health services.

National Council CEO Toby oConnor said the final report must clearly articulate the role of community-based psychosocial services, their benefits and how these services could partner with clinical care to provide an holistic, client-centred and coordinated approach to service delivery.

'The report must address the 'missing middle', the gap in service provision between primary and acute and specialist care,' he said.

'Psychosocial services play an integral part in recovery, but these services remain poorly funded.

'The Society provides a range of community-based psychosocial support services to people experiencing, at risk of, or recovering from, mental health conditions.

'These services complement state-based community mental health services and are funded largely by the Society. They range from a prevention/early intervention approach that fosters social inclusion, through to supported accommodation with access to mental health support for residents.

'The current gap between the mental health share of the health budget (7.4 per cent) and the contributions that mental health makes to the burden of disease (12 per cent) is an ongoing concern,' Mr oConnor said.

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 conferences located in individual parishes across the country.

Media contact: Judith Tokley 0408 824 306 / media@svdp.org.au