

Media Statement



21 August 2024

United Call for Action on Mental Healthcare



An alliance of stakeholders in the Northern Territory representing mental health practitioners, patients and carers are calling on **all parties and candidates** to commit to and prioritise mental healthcare for all Territorians.

“What unites us is our knowledge that the system is at breaking point, and we need urgent action,” said Dr David Chapman, Chair of the Northern Territory Branch of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP).

“This is not just a mental health or a health issue – it has serious social and economic implications.

In the Northern Territory mental health conditions account for 16.3% of the burden of disease, more than double the national burden (7.4%).^{1,2} Mental health services are woefully inadequate, and many Northern Territorians go without the services they need.

“For people in the most remote parts of the Territory, there is virtually no mental health care available.

“This is a mental health crisis. Something needs to change. We need to do better.

“The upcoming election is an opportunity for all parties to show us that they care about individuals with mental illnesses and their families and carers.”

We call on all parties and candidates to commit to:

1. Investing in the mental health workforce

The foundation of the mental health system is its workforce. Without urgent and sustainable investment to grow the specialist and peer support workforce, the system will continue to fail. We will continue to see the devastating consequences of this on individuals, families, and communities.

2. Prioritising mental health services in the community and closer to home

Providing the full range of mental health services in the community means fewer hospitalisations, healthier individuals and, ultimately, more resilient communities. We must prioritise the delivery of mental health services closer to where people live – nearly half of the Territory’s population lives in remote or very remote areas.³

3. Supporting for a Lived Experience peak body in the NT

The Northern Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction that does not recognise or support a patient or carer lived experience peak body. A peak body in the NT is essential to recognise

the crucial role and expertise of those with lived experience to establish quality, recovery-focused and person-centered mental health services.

We call on the incoming government to commit to the mental health and wellbeing of all Territorians.

References:

1. Northern Territory Primary Health Network. The NT PHN Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Needs Assessment. Canberra: Department of Health (2016).
2. Submission 408 - Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) - Mental Health - Public inquiry (pc.gov.au)
3. Northern Territory Department of Health. Annual Report 2015-16 Darwin: Department of Health, Northern Territory Government (2016).

ENQUIRIES: For more information, or to arrange an interview call Dishy Gahlowt on +61 437 315 911 or email media@ranzcp.org.

For all other expert mental health information visit [Your Health in Mind](#), the RANZCP's consumer health information website.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists is a membership organisation that prepares medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises governments and other groups on mental health care. For information about our work, our members or our history, visit www.ranzcp.org.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or www.lifeline.org.au or the Suicide Callback Service on 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au.