

MEDIA RELEASE

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MENTAL HEALTH REFORM THROUGH OUR EYES: POWER, RIGHTS AND PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health, an apolitical gathering of elected representatives and reform leaders committed to keeping mental health front and centre of the federal Parliamentary agenda, will take place in Parliament House in late November – the first time this event has been held during this term of government.

Celebrating its 21st birthday this year, the event will see National Mental Health Consumer Alliance CEO Priscilla Brice and Mental Health Carers Australia CEO Katrina Armstrong outline their vision for mental health reform.

Katrina Armstrong said the event was about a future where power and decision-making were shared.

‘Families, carers and kin are the heart of our mental health system — and their insight and advocacy save lives every day. This event is about recognising that contribution and building the next chapter together. We’re inviting everyone who believes in a system that values carers as true partners in care, not visitors to it, to join us in shaping that future.’

Priscilla called on Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health to get behind genuine co-design and co-governance.

‘Over the next couple of months Parliament will be considering the recommendations from Productivity Commission Inquiry into the Mental Health and Suicide Agreement. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the future of mental health in this country. It must be co-designed and co-governed by consumers — the people who know the system best,’ she said.

Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health is co-convened by Tracey Roberts MP (ALP), Shadow Attorney General Andrew Wallace MP (LNP) and Senator Jordon Steele-John (Greens).

The three elected representatives share a commitment to improving Australia’s mental health system and after co-convening Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health during the last term of Parliament, have put their hands up to do it again.

‘Mental health is a critical issue that affects every community,’ Tracey Roberts said.

We must ensure that all Australians have access to world-class healthcare and the support they need to live full, healthy lives. This event is an important opportunity to keep mental health reform front and centre, driven by the lived experience of those most impacted.’

Shadow Attorney-General Andrew Wallace said mental health cuts across party lines.

‘Mental health reform must be grounded in compassion, lived experience, and accountability. The voices of consumers, carers, and families must not only be heard, but built into the foundations of how we design and deliver support,’ he said.

‘As parliamentarians, our role is to listen, to learn, and to ensure that the mental health system works for every Australian who needs it. Through the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health, we are determined to keep this conversation front and centre, across all sides of politics.’

Senator Jordon Steele-John said the event offered the opportunity to champion mental health.

‘Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health is an important forum to drive reform and deliver better outcomes for people who need greater access to mental health supports. I’m proud to continue as Co-Chair of this group. With the cost-of-living crisis hitting our communities hard and significant changes to the NDIS underway, engagement through this group has never been more important. I look forward to working with MPs and Senators to advance the goals of the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health.’

Mental Illness Fellowship Australia (MIFA), a national advocacy body working on behalf of people with high need mental health challenges and their families, has been coordinating Parliamentary Friends of Mental Health since 2004.

MIFA Chair Claire Moore, a former federal senator, said the event kept mental health on the national agenda and informed effective policy.

‘The Parliamentary Friends Group has been active in our federal Parliament over many years, encouraging members of parliament to hear valuable information about the experiences of people living with mental health challenges and their carers and families, as well as research updates from across Australia and internationally. This is so important for the development and assessment of effective policy.’

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