



Senate Community Affairs Committee

Submission:
**Commonwealth funding and administration
of mental health services**

**SANE Australia is an independent national charity
working for a better life for people affected by mental illness
through education, research and campaigning.**

SANE Australia commends the Australian Government on the National Mental Health Reform package announced in the 2011 Budget. The additional funding is a welcome commitment, following on from Commonwealth allocations in the 2006 COAG Action Plan on Mental Health. Equally important is the establishment of a Mental Health Commissioner's Office, and the intention to negotiate a 10-year National Partnership Agreement on Mental Health between the States and Commonwealth.

Some concerns which we are aware of regarding the package include:

- the impact on people affected by mental illness of reducing the number of sessions which a psychologist (or other appropriately-qualified health professional) can provide on referral from a GP under a Mental Health Treatment Plan
- the complexity of accessing mental health services variously delivered by primary care and associated programs, Federally-funded programs, non-government organisations, private providers, and those provided by public mental health services; despite the welcome increase in funding there is a real concern that some people will lose out on getting help in this maze of services
- insufficient action to provide mental health services in rural and remote communities, including improvement of access to psychological and support services.

In addition to improvements in the delivery of clinical services, we urge that rehabilitation and other services in the community which promote recovery and social inclusion of people affected by mental illness are not neglected. We attach a series of SANE Research Bulletins in which Australians voice these concerns about day-to-day living with a mental illness themselves or in their family, together with a series of recommendations for improved policies and services in these areas.

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