

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sydney North Health Network on the front foot with Local Mental Health response

The Australian Government has announced that Primary Health Networks (PHNs) will take on a much larger role in the commissioning of mental health services. Northern Sydney PHN, operated by Sydney North Health Network (SNHN), will be working with local mental health service providers to determine the best way to move forward based on the mental health needs specific to the region and our community. Mental health program funding will be redirected to PHNs from July 2016 to enable commencement of their enhanced role in mental health and suicide prevention activity.

The National Mental Health Commission's Review of Mental Health Programme and Services '*Contributing Lives, Thriving Communities*', highlighted the existing complexity, inefficiency and fragmentation of the mental health system and presented a compelling case for long-term sustainable reform. The need for action is critical considering almost four million people in Australia will experience a mental illness in any one year. Mental illness is also the third largest cause of disease burden in Australia after cancer and cardiovascular disease. It is the largest single cause of non-fatal burden, and results in significant health, social and economic and productivity consequences.

SNHN CEO Lynelle Hales welcomes the announcement and says, "*Our Primary Health Network is ideally placed to lead a local approach to mental health in partnership with relevant services and our community. This will include integrated youth mental health services, suicide prevention and developing innovative approaches to meeting the clinical needs of people with severe illness and complex needs.*"

This announcement allows Primary Health Networks the opportunity to focus their efforts at a regional level to achieve a better whole of system integration around mental health.

"It is the right time to bring the multiple services, providers and community together around the table, to explore opportunities that enable a locally designed mental health practice. That means working in partnership with individuals and their carers to provide support in a way that makes sense to them, and ensuring that services and providers are available to enable choices for all people to live meaningful, satisfying and purposeful lives," says SNHN Chair and local GP Dr Magdalen Campbell.

The Northern Sydney community will benefit from a system which is planned to make the best use of available local mental health services. Primary Health Networks will help move Australia's mental health system from a one size fits all approach into tailored and care based reform that aims to ensure individuals receive the mental health services they need, when and where they need them.

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Interview Opportunities

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