



Media Release

People with mental illness may miss out in affordability schemes

The Mental Health Coalition of SA today released its 'Statement on Housing for Mental Health' calling on governments to solve the housing crisis for people with mental illness.

"The solutions being proposed so far for housing affordability are not likely to help people already disadvantaged in the market such as people with mental illness, disability or the homeless," says Geoff Harris, Executive Director, Mental Health Coalition of SA.

"Safe, affordable and stable housing is essential to recovering from mental illness and maintaining mental health. The growing housing affordability crisis requires specific focus on support initiatives for people already disadvantaged in the housing market for reasons beyond affordability.

"Whilst most attention is on new mechanisms for affordability, in the background the stock of public housing is in decline, with Housing SA stock reported to decline by around 8000 units over the next decade.

"The focus on housing affordability is welcome, however we urge decision-makers to not forget that availability of public and community housing is a key part of the solution to supporting people who are already marginalized in society.

"We would like to see state and federal governments working together to create a plan that invests funds on a sufficient scale to provide long-term, coordinated housing and support options for people living with mental illness in South Australia who are experiencing severe housing stress," Mr Harris says.

The Mental Health Coalition of SA is calling for both the Commonwealth and South Australian governments to work together on a five-year '**Housing for Mental Health Plan 2008 -2012**' that invests on a sufficient scale to provide long term, coordinated housing and support options for people with mental illness in SA who are currently in severe housing stress.

Mr Harris says "A successful five-year plan should set the goals of providing access to appropriate housing and support options for all people with mental illness, and include investing \$50 million per year in South Australia to create 500 new units of public and community housing.

"It should also ensure that timely, coordinated and targeted programs are implemented to deliver housing and supports for people with mental illness, including people exiting different parts of the mental health system, such as hospital."

For more information, please contact Geoff Harris, Executive Director, Mental Health Coalition of SA, Mob: 0401099555

The full 'Housing for Mental Health Statement' is available at www.mhcsa.org.au