

Senator the Hon Ursula Stephens

**Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Prime Minister for Social
Inclusion**

MEDIA RELEASE

Strategies for improving mental illness services a key part of the social inclusion agenda

The Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Senator Stephens, today addressed the Annual General Meeting of the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia in Canberra, ACT.

Dr Stephens said the Australian Government is committed to improving service delivery for people with mental illness and ensuring they are socially included within the Australian community.

“It is people with a mental illness who suffer the greatest exclusion of all. We want to make sure that we provide opportunities that will enable them to take part in the full range of life’s experiences,” she said.

Dr Stephens said the Government is working in partnership with States and Territories to establish an integrated national approach to service delivery. This includes establishing a mental health policy aimed at prevention and early intervention and ensuring mental health services are integrated with other primary care and specialist services.

“Central to the Government’s priorities is developing a Social Inclusion Agenda.”

“The participation opportunities for people with mental health issues, and those that care for them are central to our Social Inclusion Agenda. We must focus on creating the opportunities for their meaningful involvement in community and in employment, which is of benefit to us all,” Dr Stephens said. Dr Stephens said partnerships with the not-for-profit sector are critically important to achieving better outcomes on mental health issues and the broader social inclusion agenda.

“We recognise the enormous contribution of the sector to the Australian society and economy. Forging new and stronger partnerships with the sector is vital to achieving a better quality of life for people with a mental illness,” Dr Stephens said.

For more information on the Government’s social inclusion agenda, visit www.socialinclusion.gov.au