

17 May 2010

p: 02 6289 7013  
f: 02 6289 8470

w: [www.mentalhealth.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealth.gov.au)

NACMH Secretariat  
C/- Department of Health and Ageing  
GPO Box 9848 (MDP 37)  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear stakeholder

### **‘Daily bread, income and living with mental illness’ – Submissions invited**

The attention of National Advisory Council on Mental Health (NACMH) has been drawn to the impact of low income on the daily lives of people with mental illness and their families. It is estimated that at least a third of all Australians with a mental illness are trying to survive on less than \$20,000 a year. Income stress impacts adversely on many key areas of life including nutrition, health, recovery, housing, relationships and employment, training and recreation opportunities. A SANE report in 2009 found that people with mental illness often have to choose between medical treatment and daily essentials such as food.

The NACMH is currently preparing advice to the Minister for Health and Ageing, The Hon. Nicola Roxon MP about the extent of income-related difficulties faced by people with mental illness and their families and how these difficulties might be remedied. Options put to the NACMH so far include:

- personalised support packages including person directed schemes;
- income management;
- targeted employment and employment support programs;
- disability insurance;
- a review of the effect of Centrelink payments and polices on people with mental illness; and
- a review of how people with mental illness are faring under current PBS arrangements.

The NACMH is aware that some of these measures including income management are controversial with strongly held views both for and against. To assist with the research and preparation of its advice, the NACMH is calling for written submissions. Key questions to be addressed by the submissions include:

- How are people with mental illness and their families faring on a daily basis? What income related difficulties do they face?
- How might the income-related difficulties of people with mental illness and their families be addressed?

- Of these remedies, which ones should be pursued as a matter of priority? That is, what are the top 5 measures in order of urgency and priority?

Submissions should be forwarded by mail or electronically to the NACMH Secretariat ([NACMH@health.gov.au](mailto:NACMH@health.gov.au)) at the above address.

If you have any questions or need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Leanne Craze, NACMH Research Policy Officer via email at [Leanne.craze@bigpond.com](mailto:Leanne.craze@bigpond.com) or via phone on (02) 4625 7777.

My thanks for your consideration of this important issue. I will look forward to receiving and reading your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Mendoza', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Professor John Mendoza  
Chair  
National Advisory Council on Mental Health

[jmendoza@connetica.com.au](mailto:jmendoza@connetica.com.au)  
[NACMH@health.gov.au](mailto:NACMH@health.gov.au)

P: 07 5491 5456 M: 0415 715 900