



For Immediate Release

1 April 2016

Cuts to mental health services have been severe - and it's about to get worse.

The recent announcement that Crisis Respite Services will be cut leaves South Australia's mental health sector in a catastrophic state.

Crisis Respite offers people going through a mental health crisis a more appropriate alternative to Emergency Departments. We know this because in the past 12-months almost 40% of Crisis Respite entries were referred from Emergency Departments and short-stay units.

Despite the success of this initiative – it has been announced that funding will not be extended beyond July 2016.

"Since opening its doors in 2014, the Crisis Respite service has supported over 1800 entries across its three locations in southern, northern and central Adelaide," says Executive Director of Mental Health Coalition of SA, Geoff Harris. "People who use the service continuously tell us how important it has been at a point of distress and is their preferred option to a hospital bed.

"The provision of crisis respite addresses a key gap in South Australia mental health services and gives people experiencing distress the support they need with access to experienced mental health and recovery support teams."

Funded under the National Partnerships Agreement Improving Hospital's Program since 2014, Crisis Respite Services provide both residential and home-based support and is a partnership between Neami National and SA Health.

The National Mental Health Commission Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services was released a year ago and recommended the most urgent priority for mental health was to invest in community based services.

Despite this Report and its key recommendations, we have already seen the Intensive Home-Based Support Service (IHBSS) - funded through a Commonwealth State Agreement - close its doors on 30 June 2015.

An independent evaluation of IHBSS proved it was effective in assisting people with severe mental illness rapidly recover from an episode of illness. The evaluation also showed this program would pay for itself offsetting the costs from reduced demand on hospital services.

"While the big story of COAG is about tax reform and solving the income crisis, at a local level innovative mental health services that have proven to be effective are being disappearing," says Harris. "The big losers will be the people severely impacted by mental illness and their families when they most need mental health support."

For interviews please call **Geoff Harris** of Mental Health Coalition of SA on **0401 099 555**.