

## Mental health system failing mentally ill and their carers

Data from the *Report on Government Services 2011*<sup>1</sup> has confirmed what we already know – the NSW mental health system is failing patients and their carers.

The report, produced by the Productivity Commission, has shown NSW spends less of its mental health budget on community-based services than any other state.

NSW also ranked poorly in 'community follow up for people within the first 7 days of discharge from hospital' and had progressively got worse in this area between 2005 and 2009.

"People with a mental illness and their carers are crying out for change," said Elena Katrakis, CEO of Carers NSW. "This report proves the current system is not good enough."

"Since deinstitutionalisation, responsibility for mental health care has shifted onto carers and families. The institutions that were closed were not replaced with adequate community services. As a result, many carers are at breaking point."

"Carers of people with a mental illness are the highest users of Carers NSW counselling services. We are hearing time and time again about the grief and frustration encountered by carers who are excluded from the treatment process, and receiving little or no support themselves."

### Carers NSW is calling on all election candidates to:

1 Increase funding for mental health in NSW in line with the proportion of the health burden constituted by mental health.

2 Improve the quality, range and capacity of services and supports for people with mental illness, including appropriate accommodation options and social and vocational supports.

3 Improve the quality, range and capacity of community services and supports for carers of people with a mental illness, including education, counselling and respite.

4 Advocate through the Council of Australian Governments for mental health reform on a national level and the inclusion of mental health in the National Health and Hospital Reform (NHHR), in line with the 12 recommendations of the NHHR Commission regarding mental health.

"The NSW mental health system must move from being crisis driven to wholistic in its approach," said Ms Katrakis.

Go to [www.dontbecareless.org.au](http://www.dontbecareless.org.au) to find out more and take action this state election.

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<sup>1</sup> Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2011  
<http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2011>