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MEDIA RELEASE

REFORMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA HAVE FAILED THE MENTALLY ILL

"Current leadership, reforms, and accountability in mental health have failed to bring about the necessary changes in the mental health care in Western Australia," Chair of the Mental Health Council of Australia, Keith Wilson said today following the launch of *Not For Service: Experiences of Injustice and Despair in Mental Health Care in Australia*, the most significant report into mental health in Australia for over a decade.

"Despite increases in spending in mental health, Western Australia still faces considerable cultural, geographic, and workforce challenges", Mr Wilson said.

Not For Service exposes the persistent and distressing experiences of Australians dealing with mental illness that result from the systemic deficiencies of the mental health system 12 years after all Australian Governments initiated the National Mental Health Strategy to tackle decades of neglect.

The Report states that while Western Australia has increased its spending in mental health and made major commitments to primary mental health care it has not resulted in real service improvements to date.

Tony Fowke, Board Member of the Mental Health Council of Australia and Member of the National Consumer Carer Forum said, "Western Australia has made few efforts to deal with the problems faced by regional and remote communities."

Professor Ian Hickie, a co-author the report stresses that Australia urgently needs all governments to commit to a process of genuine and well-resourced mental health reform. "What we do not need is continued blaming of those who use the services, those professionals who provide the services or those independent bodies who report on them," Prof. Hickie said.

Not For Service calls on all Australian governments to increase expenditure on mental health care services by 1% per annum for each of the next five years, bringing expenditure by 2010 to 12% of total health care funding in real terms.

The Western Australian Government must increase spending on mental health in 2006/7 by \$29m based on their 2004/5 budget.

Not For Service has been compiled by the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) and the Brain and Mind Research Institute (BRMI, University of Sydney), in association with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

Copies of *Not For Service* can be found at: www.mhca.org.au

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