



# Kevin Humphries MP

## Minister for Mental Health

## Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

## Minister for Western NSW

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **TIME TO SEEK A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF SCHIZOPHRENIA**

Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries, has called on the community to seek a better understanding of schizophrenia and its impacts on those it affects during Schizophrenia Awareness Week, which begins today.

Mr Humphries said that despite there being more than 220,000 people throughout Australia living with schizophrenia, there is still a significant degree of stigma and misunderstanding that clouds the illness.

“Schizophrenia Awareness Week provides the community with an opportunity to reflect on the impact schizophrenia and mental illness has on those who live with it, and on the broader community,” Mr Humphries said.

“Like with all mental illnesses, stigma is often the greatest barrier to recovery. I would encourage people to take the time this week to find out more about those amongst us living with schizophrenia and about the illness itself.”

The focus of Schizophrenia Awareness Week 2013 is on the physical health of people with schizophrenia and other mental illnesses.

“People with a serious mental illness die, on average, 25 years earlier than the general population, while 70 per cent of people with a serious mental illness die from cardiovascular disease compared with 18 per cent of the general population,” Mr Humphries said.

“Too many families have lost their loved ones too soon from preventable physical illnesses exacerbated by mental illness and there are too many families that are currently worried they will lose a loved one too soon.

“That is why later this month I am convening a summit of Australia’s state and federal mental health ministers, which will seek to address the high rates of adverse health outcomes and premature death amongst people with a mental illness.

“The National Summit on Addressing the Premature Death of People with Mental Illness - which will be held in NSW Parliament House on May 24<sup>th</sup> - will develop a targeted strategy to reduce the rate of avoidable death from cardiovascular, respiratory and infectious diseases among people with a serious mental illness.

“Through the summit I will be pushing for national agreement on a range of realistic and meaningful reforms that will lead to improvements in the life expectancy and the quality of life of people with a mental illness.”

For more information on Schizophrenia Awareness Week visit: <http://www.sfnsw.org.au>