



SHANE RATTENBURY MLA

Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability

Minister for Justice, Consumer Affairs and Road Safety

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Mental Health

Member for Kurrajong

MEDIA RELEASE

“Stronger Together”: Canberrans urged to tackle mental health stigma, discrimination this Mental Health Month

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In marking the launch of Mental Health Month 2017 the ACT Human Rights Commission and the ACT Government are encouraging the community to connect with friends, family and colleagues who may be doing it tough.

“One in five Australians experience mental illness at some stage in their lives – that’s one in five people who count as friends, people we work with, or play sport with,” ACT Discrimination Commissioner Karen Toohey said.

“Mental illness can lead to isolation, exclusion or discrimination, all of which makes it harder to recover.”

This year’s Mental Health Week theme “Stronger Together” was also a reminder to everyone in the community that we all share a responsibility to reach out and support those who are struggling with mental health issues.

Both Commissioner Toohey and the ACT’s first Minister for Mental Health Shane Rattenbury noted that importance of additional mental health support for our LGBTIQ community during, and onwards, from the current marriage equality debate.

“As a community we can do a lot to support people directly and indirectly. As allies and bystanders we can also do our bit to support those members of our community who may face discrimination in the course of their everyday lives,” Commissioner Toohey said.

“As a community, it’s time we engaged with mental health differently,” Mr Rattenbury said. “Rather than focusing on just the ‘problem’ of mental illness, we should also consider the resilience and strength that supporting each other can bring,” Mr Rattenbury said.

“This is especially important during the current debate around marriage equality. For many LGBTIQ families in our community, the public debate around the legitimacy of their relationships can be hurtful and distressing. We encourage all Canberrans to check in with your friends, colleagues and family members. It’s as simple as asking ‘are you okay?’ to start these important conversations.”

“In the ACT, the Discrimination Act protects people from discrimination and vilification on the basis of their disability, gender identity, sexuality or religion,” Commissioner Toohey added.

“If you witness or experience discrimination, vilification or abuse, we would like to hear from you. Please reach out to the Human Rights Commission for future information.”

Canberrans who may have witnessed or experienced discrimination and/or vilification are strongly encouraged to contact the Human Rights Commission on 6207 2222 or freecall 1800 822 272.

Mental Health Week will take place from 8-14 October 2017—October is Mental Health Month. A list of events [can be found here](#). More information is available on [ACT Health’s website](#).

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