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Joint Media Release

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“NOT AN ISOLATED FAILURE”: Peak Bodies Demand Truth-Telling and a National Psychosocial Scheme Following Shocking Evidentiary Footage

SYDNEY — In the wake of last night’s *‘Brutal Force’* episode aired on ABC’s *Four Corners* program, exposing police violence against mental health consumers, Australia’s peak bodies representing mental health consumers have issued an urgent call to the Commonwealth, State, and Territory governments: use the current negotiation of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement to permanently end the over-criminalisation of distress.

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance (NMHCA), alongside NSW peak body BEING – Mental Health Consumers, warns that the “gratuitous cruelty” inflicted upon Jodi Knott in Sydney is the sharpest visible point of an undocumented, daily reality for consumers under a system built on coercion and a total absence of human rights enforcement.

The horrifying treatment of Jodi Knott is not an anomaly. In July 2025, BEING and Mental Health Carers NSW (MHCN) wrote a joint letter to the NSW Minister for Police, Yasmin Catley, noting that in the five years prior to July 2023, 52 people experiencing a mental health crisis had been killed by NSW Police. This staggering figure represents the vast majority of the approximately 60 people killed by police during that period.

The state’s own independent watchdog has explicitly stated the treatment experienced by Jodi reflects a chronic, unresolved failure. In its five-year [review](#) of critical incidents published in 2023, the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) found nearly half—sixty-eight out of one hundred and fifty-seven incidents—involved a person in a mental health crisis and resulted in death or serious injury.

The LECC noted that, despite coronial recommendations to improve police responses, training remains “extremely limited”, stating: “the adequacy of the training provided to police officers... involving a person experiencing a mental health crisis... [has been] an issue for the NSWPF, long before the Commission commenced monitoring.”

Successive governments have inadequately supported people with mental health challenges, and the failure to train police in de-escalation and safety has led to the systemic discrimination and criminalisation of mental health consumers.

In January 2023, Jodi Knott was experiencing an acute psychotic episode, having been released from a correctional centre only hours prior. Detained under the NSW *Mental Health Act*, a District Court judge later described Jodi’s treatment by police as “gratuitous cruelty”—showing a naked,

frightened woman kicked, stomped, dragged by her hair, and repeatedly pepper-sprayed at close range while posing no threat. Jodi committed no crime and died of cancer eighteen months later; her family fought for years to release the footage so Australia could no longer look away.

“Jodi had a face, a name, and people who loved her. A person reaching her worst moment was met not with care, but with violence,” said Alliance Chair, Mr Mathew Fagan. “This occurs because Australia has a profound, systemic shortage of community-based, peer-led psychosocial supports. If Jodi had been met by a trusted, peer-led crisis service built on relationship and safety, the events of that day would have been different.”

The peaks argue that the crisis is being [compounded](#) by concurrent federal attempts to tighten NDIS eligibility thresholds before alternative support systems are in place to catch those who drop out or are locked out by tighter entry criteria.

“Neglecting foundational psychosocial supports forces people directly into the path of expensive, involuntary acute care and law enforcement,” said BEING CEO, Mx Giancarlo de Vera. “In New South Wales alone, the Government already spends nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars above modelled levels on crisis responses. This 80% state budget blowout is essentially a 'crisis tax' — funding trauma and sirens at the back end instead of investing in community-led supports that prevent consumers from reaching crisis in the first place.”

The National and State Call to Action

To address this systemic failure, the Alliance and BEING are proposing immediate action at both state and federal levels.

At the state level, the NSW Government must immediately implement proposals [previously](#) outlined by BEING and MHCN to the NSW Minister for Police, which include:

- Issuing a public apology to the victims and loved ones of those killed by police.
- Hosting a truth-telling process to hear directly from the community and recognise the harm caused.
- Mandating annual public reporting to the NSW Parliament on the number of people experiencing mental health crises who are shot or injured by police.

With NSW Police and NSW Health due to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to transition to a health-led response to those experiencing mental health crises, BEING stands ready to work with the NSW Government to co-design this transition, ensuring that community-based, peer-led models are at the core of the new response framework.

Nationally, as governments currently draft and negotiate the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, the Alliance and BEING insist that the mechanism be used to change the default system design through five non-negotiable mandates:

- **Establish a National Psychosocial Support Scheme:** Funded community-based psychosocial and foundational supports that reach the hundreds of thousands of consumers currently left outside the NDIS with nowhere to go.
- **Ensure the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* Covers Police:** Right now, Commonwealth discrimination laws are being reviewed. Laws that protect people against

discrimination must cover the discriminatory behaviour of police, whose discriminatory attitudes fuel the criminalisation of mental health consumers across Australia.

- **Resource Peer-Led Responses:** Embed and fully resource consumer-designed crisis responses so that a person in distress is met by someone with lived experience who understands, rather than a badge and physical force.
- **End Over-Criminalisation:** Fund genuine, health-led alternatives to police and custodial responses to psychological distress across Australia.
- **Anchor Governance in Human Rights:** Embed strict consumer leadership, legislative accountability, and reportable benchmarks so the dignity of consumers is protected in practice, not just in principle.

“We are ready to lead this work with governments,” said Mx de Vera. “But we will no longer sign off on roadmaps that leave our community on a hamster wheel of clinical silos, structural violence, and rights without remedy”.

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