

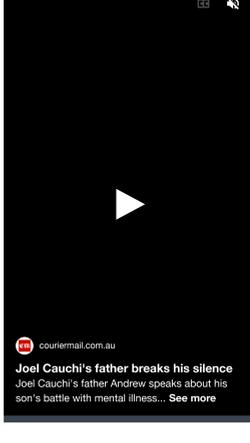
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Psychologists call for action not words on mental health crisis

Australian psychologists are calling for more state and federal action on serious mental health after another inquiry was announced.

 **Angira Bharadwaj** [Follow](#)

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Australian psychologists are saying people with schizophrenia are falling through the cracks of the healthcare system despite the NDIS budget being on track to hit \$100bn.

The Australian Association of Psychologists director Carly Dober said western Queensland, where killer Joel Cauchi was raised, is an area of "high concern" with serious "mental health shortages".

Cauchi's [distraught parents have revealed](#) he was diagnosed with schizophrenia at 17-years-old and had weaned himself off his medication in recent years because they made him feel unwell.

"While we should investigate what can be learned from this senseless tragedy, another mental health inquiry announced by NSW Premier Chris Minns ... when we have already had multiple inquiries in recent years, is the last thing people with serious mental health conditions need. People need action and services," she said.



NDIS and Government Services Minister, Bill Shorten during Question Time at Parliament House in Canberra. Picture: Martin Ollman

"From almost the beginning of the NDIS, people with serious mental health conditions like schizophrenia have been supported through the NDIS.

"The NDIS has been increasingly more difficult for people to access for those who are experiencing mental illness, and once people do get on the scheme, navigating the system is incredibly difficult."

Ms Dober said "participants will often have their funding stripped due to no fault of their own".

One family told The Daily Telegraph they had attempted to get their family member diagnosed with schizophrenia on the NDIS scheme but were rejected.

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Carly Dober, Director at the Australian Association of Psychologists.

"They (the NDIS) accepted that she had schizophrenia, but said we hadn't explored other options aside from medication to establish her cure. That was the exact word, cure, for an incurable disease," the concerned family member said.

"I was also told by the NDIS assessor that schizophrenia is a very common diagnosis, and there is a lot of help, other than NDIS, and we should try other pathways. They offered no suggestions on how to do that."

Painting a concerning picture of the NSW health system, an emergency department nurse at one of Sydney's top public hospitals, told the Telegraph that patients with schizophrenia were a large chunk of their presentations — even outweighing physical injuries.

The NDIS supports people with psychosocial disability which can result when people suffer from serious mental illness with schizophrenia being the most common diagnosis.

One in two NDIS participants with a psychosocial primary disability had a diagnosis of Schizophrenia as their main diagnosis as at the end of 2021, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

But NDIS Minister Bill Shorten's office did not respond to queries saying the responsibility of mental health rests primarily with the states.

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