



Media release

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'Bouquets for State Budget but (show us the money) for Mental Health Act'

"The Palaszczuk Government's 2016-17 Budget addresses some of the obvious shortfalls in this State's criminal justice system" said Queensland Advocacy Incorporated's Director Michelle O'Flynn. "Queensland Advocacy Incorporated commends the Government's commitment of new funding to Legal Aid Queensland, the rollout of specialised courts and court diversion programs such as the Murri Court, Drug Court and Queensland Integrated Court referrals, new funding to address the backlog in indictments and the surplus of inmates on prison remand, and measures to address domestic and family violence."

"All of these initiatives will benefit people with disability, who are overrepresented throughout the criminal justice system as victims, witnesses, suspects, defendants and prisoners."

"However, the implementation of the new *Mental Health Act 2016* (Qld) (the MHA) has been overlooked" she said. The MHA is the product of several years of consultation and drafting.

"Fully implemented, it has the potential to make the criminal justice and mental health systems more accessible for people with mental health or cognitive disabilities. It will fail miserably if its fine initiatives are not properly funded."

"Court liaison services to identify people with intellectual impairment must be supported with adequate funds. These services will provide Magistrates with the support they will need to exercise their discretionary powers for court diversion, ensuring that the programs deliver the intended outcomes" said Ms O'Flynn.

"The success of these programs depends on funding to attract and retain skilled staff and quality services. Properly funded, these programs will do more than save taxpayers money that would otherwise be spent on court processes and incarceration in the future. They will provide a pathway out of the criminal justice system for people with disabilities who find themselves trapped within it."

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