



Media Statement - Embargoed until Midnight Tuesday 30 June 2009

Schizophrenia Fellowship has makeover and steps out as Supporting Families in Mental Illness

“We are pleased to announce that from today (1 July '09), Schizophrenia Fellowship New Zealand will be known as Supporting Families in Mental Illness New Zealand (*Supporting Families*),” said Florence Leota, Chief Executive.

Supporting Families was established over 30 years ago and is New Zealand’s largest non governmental organization in the mental health sector that provides support to families/whanau affected by mental illness. It has 21 branches nation-wide and a national office located in Wellington.

“Our organisation is a great supporter of integrated care where the family, clinicians and service providers all work together to provide the best possible recovery plan for those experiencing a mental illness,” said Ms Leota. “We are committed to providing high quality information, education, advocacy and support for families.

“We believe that our new name shows the role we provide to families affected by all serious mental illnesses including schizophrenia, anxiety/panic disorders and bipolar,” Ms Leota said.

The Associate Minister of Health responsible for Mental Health, Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman, noted that one in five New Zealanders experiences a mental illness at some stage in their lives, with many more New Zealanders being directly or indirectly affected by that.

“Families/whānau can play a key role in the recovery process for someone who experiences a mental illness. The involvement of families is known to reduce the number of relapses.

“The new name highlights the focus on families. It also reflects the vital role this organization plays in the community. This is another positive step forward in enabling *Supporting Families* to reach out to families who need their help,” said Minister Coleman.

“It is important that families know they don’t have to face the challenges alone and work in isolation. We can help them. We encourage families to go to our website www.sfnat.org.nz where they can contact their local *Supporting Families* branch,” said Ms Leota.

- End -

For more information contact: Florence Leota on 0211160979