



The 2011-2012 Victorian Budget

VICSERV, the peak body representing community managed mental health services in Victoria welcomed the funding of some of the Government's key election promises in the area of community mental health as part of the Coalition's first budget.

Recognising the community-managed mental health sector's role in supporting people in their recovery in mental illness, the budget has allocated \$3.5 million in new funding over 3 years in redeveloping infrastructure. Capital funding as well as \$11.8 million over 5 years for the expansion of PDRS services was earmarked. This signals an era of reform for the PDRS sector as government moves to improve efficiency across the board.

This is coupled with an additional \$8.4 million over 5 years in reoccurring funding for the expansion of PDRS services. However total output cost targets translate in only a 0.95% increase in funding allocation to PDRS services once inflation and population growth are taken into account - an extremely modest increase in a very tight budget.

Most pleasing was the recognition of the importance of social inclusion in the recovery process. A total of \$0.9 million over 3 years will go towards the development of pathways to economic participation for people with severe mental illness and \$3.2 million over 5 years towards assistance in accessing the rental market. The former will be in the form of an education and employment officer located at two area mental health services.

A further \$0.9 million has been allocated over 5 years for improving housing access for people with severe mental illness. This is welcome relief for the many people with severe mental illness who are struggling to secure stable accommodation. VICSERV hopes that this is the beginning of a long-term investment in breaking down barriers, including programs addressing community attitudes towards mental illness which obstruct access to stable accommodation.

The Victorian government has also allocated funds for grants towards the upgrade of *Headspace* facilities as well as the funding of specialist mental health support to selected *Headspace* services.

The evidence-base of the community managed mental health sector is further recognised by the funding of \$10 million for the establishment of the Mental Illness Research Fund. The fund will be supported by a strategic research agenda focused on applied research.

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