

MEDIA RELEASE

A big move forward: Mental Health Victoria welcomes \$2.3 billion Federal mental health budget.

Wednesday 12 May 2021

Mental Health Victoria CEO Angus Clelland said last night's Federal Budget announcement represents the "start of a long-overdue generational shift in mental health and suicide prevention investment".

MHV welcomed last night's announcement of a record \$2.3 billion investment in mental health and suicide prevention over four years to 2025.

Stand-out budget initiatives included \$820 million in commitments for the expansion of the fledgling national adult community mental health centre program, enhancement of headspace, and establishment of child mental health and wellbeing hubs.

"As long-time advocates for investment in accessible, multidisciplinary service hubs in the community, we are delighted that the Federal Government has prioritised this initiative. This investment, along with the expansion of digital mental health and suicide prevention services, will improve the mental health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of Australians, and save lives," Mr Clelland said.

"We particularly welcome the Federal Government's commitment to ensure that a number of the new adult and child mental health centres will focus on providing care for particular vulnerable groups, such as LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

"We commend the Federal Government for its ongoing leadership and commitment to mental health reform and recognise that this Budget is just the first phase of the response to the findings of the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health and the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's Final Report," Mr Clelland said.

"Mental health and suicide prevention are a joint Federal-State/Territory responsibility. Victoria and the Commonwealth have stepped up to the plate. It is now time for the other jurisdictions to do the same."

MHV urged all jurisdictions to work together towards a new National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, with priority given to critical areas, including:

- expansion of the psychosocial support program to include the hundreds of thousands of Australians living with severe mental illness who are ineligible for the NDIS;
- making the temporary telehealth MBS services a permanent offering after the very welcome extension to 31 December 2021;
- tackling the large out-of-pocket expenses for people seeking help from psychologists and psychiatrists; and
- development and growth of the domestic mental health workforce.

“There are critical national workforce shortages across all mental health and suicide prevention disciplines – including nursing, social work, occupational therapy, lived experience/peer work, psychology and psychiatry,” Mr Clelland said.

“Victoria alone will need many thousands of new mental health and suicide prevention workers to implement Royal Commission recommendations, as well as new Federal Government initiatives, over the next five years.

“Without concerted effort across all jurisdictions to build the workforce, our ability to deliver the reforms, improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australians, and save lives, will be constrained,” he said.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Angus Clelland, please call Clare Callow on 0410 147 988