

MEDIA RELEASE

BUDGET 2018-19: A GOOD START, BUT PREVENTION NEEDS PRIORITY

Mental Health Victoria welcomes the Victorian Government's announcement of \$705 million in funding for mental health and addiction over the next four years.

The 2018-19 Budget contains some important and much needed investment including more hospital beds, the establishment of six emergency crisis hubs, and other facilities that will support more Victorians in crisis. We also welcome initiatives to strengthen the mental health workforce and expand the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) initiative.

While a good start, the new investment in mental health needs to be viewed in the context of a system that has been chronically underfunded for more than a decade.

This chronic underfunding has seen Victoria gain the dubious distinction of having the lowest per capita expenditure on mental health in Australia. Access to specialist mental health services in this state sits at 39% under the national average, and the number of beds is well below the average of comparable states. Over the past four years, the number of emergency department mental health admissions has jumped by 19% to more than 52,000 per year – that is one admission every 10 minutes – with an increasing burden being carried by police and ambulance services.

Mental Health Victoria notes overwhelming evidence that early intervention and care in the community prevents the need for hospitalisation and ensures that people with mental illness can remain active and engaged within their workplaces and communities.

We remain concerned at the lack of funding for community-managed care and are disappointed that the Victorian Government has not matched the \$80 million National Psychosocial Support Measure in the 2017-18 Commonwealth Budget aimed at supporting people who will not be eligible for the NDIS.

We also note the lack of investment in supporting mental health carers, and eagerly await the release of the Victorian Government's Carers Strategy, along with appropriate on-the-ground supports.

Given the strong economic outlook and Budget surplus, Mental Health Victoria urges the Victorian Government to build on the promise of this budget, and to take further action to fix Victoria's mental health system.

Quote attributable to Damian Ferrie – Board Chair, Mental Health Victoria

"Further investment is needed not only in bricks and mortar but in services delivered in the community to prevent people getting into crisis. These services are inexpensive and are proven to reduce hospital admission rates"

Mental Health Victoria is a not-for-profit peak body representing Mental Health Services in Victoria

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