



Media Release

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Mental health – ALP announcement. Great start, but still a long way to go

The Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has welcomed the ALP mental health commitments announced by Prime Minister Gillard and Health Minister Roxon.

Ms Michelle Swallow, the MHCT CEO said, 'the announcement outlined today by the Prime Minister is a fantastic start, particularly in relation to the increased focus on the experiences of mental health consumers and carers as measures of mental health service provision. The funding for suicide programs, workplace, community support, child, youth and prevention measures are all great initiatives.'

Ms Swallow noted that 'the \$60 million boost to non-clinical support services provided by community based, non-government providers who currently provide services through the Support for Day to Day Living, Personal Helpers and Mentors, and Mental Health Respite program' was a welcomed component of the announcement'.

Ms Swallow said, 'it is however disappointing the package did not go further; there is an urgent need to address many years of neglect from all levels of government. The reality is that mental health needs a significant investment and this package falls short of what most mental health advocates have been lobbying for to address the major service gaps currently experienced by mental health consumers and carers.'

Ms Swallow said, 'the community mental health sector seeks a commitment from government to fund a national social inclusion, anti-stigma campaign funded for an initial four years. The economic costs of social exclusion are extremely high. The cost of mental ill-health is estimated at 3%-4% of Australia's GDP.'

'Those countries that have undergone a national anti-stigma and discrimination reduction program, are finding that there are measurable changes in public attitudes, behaviours, media reportage, and acceptance of people with mental illness. Discrimination is a significant issue. International programs have demonstrated how to succeed and how investment in a social inclusion campaign provides an overall benefit to the economy.'

'Community mental health services have not received adequate funding for decades despite having to pick up the load from diminishing numbers of mental health beds across Tasmania and the rest of Australia, Ms Swallow noted.

Ms Swallow stated today that while the MHCT supports the ALP approach, it does not address the complete needs that the MHCT and other groups have been calling for.'

For further information and to arrange interviews, contact:

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