

Mental Health Council Responds to Health Focused State Budget

The Mental Council of Tasmania [MHCT] welcomes the measures in today's budget that specifically relate to improving the mental health system for Tasmanians. The majority of measures for the mental health sector were released last week, however, today we are able to see where they sit in terms of the rest of the health budget.

A welcome inclusion in the budget is a new level of clinical support that will be delivered outside of the hospital system at Tolosa Street Mental Health Facility.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis is pleased to see such a significant investment into the community mental health sector. "The addition of this initiative for the Tolosa facility is a way to deliver a standard of care that best suits an individual's needs. It will provide a welcome reprieve for our emergency departments and acute system, and is a significant step towards integrating our mental health services" said Ms Digolis.

The Department of Health and Human Services has announced the following additional funding for the Community Mental Health Sector to include:

- \$11.4 million for packages of care for Tasmanians with complex mental illness:
 - 7.2 million over 4 years to Bapcare's MI Care Program which will assist around 100 Tasmanians to receive supports in the community and prevent hospital admissions.
 - Funding will also go to Life Without Barrier's #iConnect program which provides high intensity supports for young Tasmanians aged 12-18years.
- \$2.2 million for rural outreach services, with \$1.7m to Rural Alive and Well
- \$1.8 million over three years for early intervention and suicide prevention referral services provided by Anglicare. This program will directly assist and provide support Tasmanians who have attempted suicide and are then discharged from hospital.
- \$75,000 over the forward estimates with ensure the continuation of the grassroots mental health program currently being delivered through Neighbourhood houses.

"It is always encouraging to see specific investment into programs that will directly help Tasmanians experiencing mental illness. Any programs or initiatives that prevent people from needing to be admitted to hospital or assist them from needing further admissions should be prioritised within our health system."

"We need to see the focus shift right away from the acute sector and into prevention and early intervention. There will always be a need to have acute beds for patients with mental-ill health but surely we need to look at more targeted approaches to invest in measures that will further reduce the pressures on our hospitals. Evidence tells us the key to people's long term recovery and wellbeing is in the community"

The Department of Education has announced already two specific measures that should assist with the support of mental health and wellbeing in schools.

- \$250,000 to Speak Up Stay ChatTY to continue their Team ChatTY suicide prevention and resilience building program in schools
- An additional 14.8 FTE professional support staff are employed across Government schools including speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers. This will also be supported by the \$4 million investment into the school nurse program - all of whom will have mental health and alcohol and drug training.

"The Mental Health Council would like to commend this type of investment into the mental health of our young people. We need to extend this type of support even further into to the broader Tasmanian community," said Ms Digolis.

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